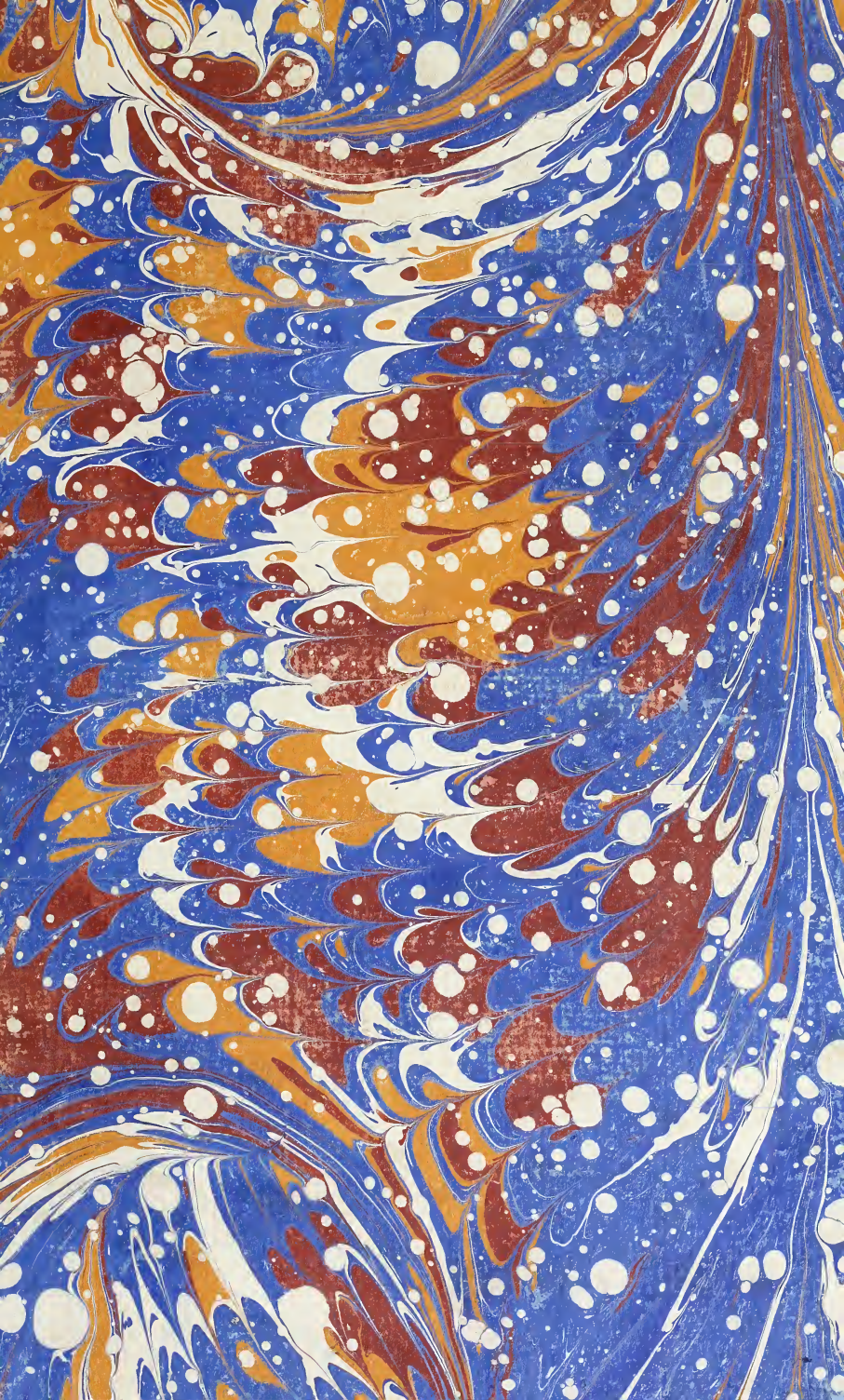

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LETTERS

TO A

Young Nobleman.

LETTERS

TO A

Young Nobleman.

CIVIS ET EGREGIUS PATRIÆ CONTINGIS OVANTI.

By the Revd Mr Wallace Tutor to the Duke of Gordon.

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LETTER I.

On STUDY in general.

MY LORD,

YOUR Lordſhip's high rank and quality, your fortune and proſpects in the world, will make abundance of people deſirous of your company, fond of appearing with you at public places, and of being of your parties at every gay ſcene of diverſion, pleaſure and amuſement. Allow me, my Lord, to have another ambition, and to make uſe of that correſpondence you have deſired me to trouble you with, to become the companion of your moſt private hours and leaſt diſſipated moments.

I HOPE your Lordſhip has a great many ſuch hours; for, though you are now enter-

ing upon that period of life, which none, but ſurly, moroſe, and fooliſh pedants, would debar from gaiety and diverſion, yet upon the manner in which you employ your preſent time, does your future figure and character in the world depend. As well might a huſbandman, who ſhould be altogether idle in ſeed-time, expect to reap a plentiful crop, as one who trifles away the ſpring of his life, in fooliſh diſſipation or vitious riot, to attain to honour and renown, or to acquire the character of a wiſe and great man.

Look around you, my Lord, and obſerve who have attained to a high reputation for wiſdom and abilities, then enquire how they ſpent their youth: turn over the annals of hiſtory, mark the names which have been tranſmitted down to poſterity with honour and applauſe, read the liſt of patriots and heroes, ſtudy their lives, and you will find that their behaviour during their youth, when they were preparing themſelves for appearing upon the theatre of the world, laid the foundation of whatever figure they made,

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or whatever glory they acquired, when they came to act their different parts in life.

'TIS the duty of all young people, my Lord, to improve their minds, and to fit themſelves for the world; but in a particular manner, 'tis the duty of young noblemen, as upon their characters much depends, and they have many helps and advantages which thoſe of inferior rank are deprived of. Others muſt labour to acquire knowledge and ſkill in thoſe different profeſſions by which they propoſe to make their fortunes in the world; their thoughts muſt be principally employed about particular details; only a part of their time, and ſometimes a very ſmall part of it, can be ſpared to ſtudy what may improve them in a general knowledge of men and manners, and in a graceful and eaſy politeneſs. But thoſe, whom fortune has placed in ſuch circumſtances as your Lordſhip's, have all the time they could wiſh for, to make themſelves accompliſhed gentlemen.

BESIDES, my Lord, the paths of knowledge, your ſtation calls upon you to purſue, are not rugged, dull, or diſagreeable; on the contrary, they are the moſt ſmooth, chearful and entertaining imaginable. To read the works of thoſe immortal authors, who have expreſſed the nobleſt ſentiments in the fineſt language; to ſtudy the hiſtory of mankind, and to become acquainted with what has happened in the different countries and ages of the world; to obſerve the gradual riſe and decline of arts and ſciences, to reflect upon their cauſes, to ſtudy the conſtitution of your country, and to conſider what alterations have happened in it, and how theſe have been brought about; what is there in all this that does not promiſe the higheſt entertainment? The lawyer muſt ſlave many years in reading reports and acts of parliament; the phyſician muſt ſpend much time in fixing in his memory the names and properties of medicines, and in ſtudying the mechaniſm of the different parts of the human body; in every profeſſion much inſipid drudgery muſt be undergone, before one

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can poſſibly expect to become eminent. But to arrive at that knowledge, which is neceſſary to make a man of rank and fortune uſeful in the world, happy and agreeable in himſelf, a ſupport and delight to his friends, a guardian and ornament to his country, no ſuch drudgery is neceſſary. He can hardly ever employ his time in a manner proper for his improvement, without ſpending it in ſuch a way as muſt afford him more real pleaſure, even when he is alone and buſy, than any idle trifler can poſſibly enjoy in his irrational and fooliſh parties of diſſipation.

I WAS juſt going to ſay, that if the ways which would lead a young man of quality to honour and glory be ſo eaſy and agreeable, how inexcuſable muſt their folly be who widely wander from the enlightened road of wiſdom, to follow the dark paths of ignorance, which lead to infamy and reproach. But, my Lord, when I reflect upon your Lordſhip's good diſpoſitions, methinks I have already ſaid too much, and that I ought to make an apology for what I have written.

If my correſpondence can be any way agreeable to you, much more if it can be uſeful, I ſhall reckon myſelf extremely happy, and ſhall omit no opportunity of communicating my thoughts to you, whenever it appears to me, that they may poſſibly be of any advantage, or afford entertainment to your Lordſhip.

I am, &c.

LETTER II.

On the STUDY of HISTORY.

MY LORD,

SOME knowledge of hiſtory is expected of every one, who pretends to a character above that of the meaneſt vulgar. Of thoſe indeed whom fortune has,

------ Doom'd to ſcythes and ſpades,
And all thoſe hard laborious trades *;

And whoſe ſituation in life affords them no opportunities of inſtruction, a knowledge of any thing beyond the bounds of their own narrow circle is not expected. But they, to whom fortune has been more liberal, whoſe

* Fable of the Bees.

ſpirits are not oppreſſed by corporeal labour, and who have leiſure to open the fair book of knowledge, hardly deſerve the name of men, if, ſatisfied with every trifling incident that occurs to them in their own little ſphere of action, their curioſity never prompts them to enquire what has been done in ages and countries different from their own, or to review thoſe great events which have happened on this terreſtrial globe in its various periods. The age of man, if extended to its utmoſt duration, is but a very confined period, and ſo much of it paſſes away in the thoughtleſs play-time of infancy, ſo much of it is ſwallowed up by the violent paſſions of youth, ſo much of it is entirely loſt in ſleep and neceſſary reſt; that the remaining part, even though we were to ſuppoſe every moment employed in reflection and obſervation, muſt be reduced to a very ſmall point. That knowledge, therefore, which is derived from perſonal experience alone, muſt be confined within very narrow limits. Hence the utility of hiſtory is obvious, which by carrying us back through a chain of events, to that

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æra when truth is loſt in fable, lengthens out, as it were, the period of human life; and puts us in poſſeſſion of obſervations drawn from the experience of ſucceſſive ages *. I do not mean to inſinuate however, that the trueſt wiſdom is not the fruit of experience, but only that the beſt method of enabling us to make juſt reflections, and to draw true concluſions from what happens to ourſelves, or falls within our own obſervation, is to become acquainted with what has happened to others, and with what their conduct has been in circumſtances ſimilar to our own.

WE muſt often, my Lord, find ourſelves, eſpecially at our ſetting out in life, in ſituations new to us, and quite different from any thing we have experienced before; thoſe, therefore, who are uninſtructed how others have

* Nec enim ſuam tantum ætatem bene tuentur: omne ævum ſuo adjiciunt. Quicquid annorum ante illos actum eſt, illis acquiſitum eſt——nullo nobis ſæculo interdictum eſt: in omnia admittimur; et ſi magnitudine animi egredi humanæ imbecillitatis anguſtias libet, multum per quod ſpatiemur temporis eſt.

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acted in such circumstances, must be blest with uncommon judgment and quickness, not to be liable to fall into errors, and sometimes into such errors, as may have a fatal influence upon their future conduct.

MANY examples might be brought to prove, that the Study of History may in some measure supply the want of experience. Allow me to put you in mind of the known story of Lucullus; who, though he went from Rome, ignorant of the art of war, yet by spending the time of his journey and voyage partly in asking questions of men of knowledge, and partly in reading the History of former actions*, came to Asia with such a character, and performed such exploits as obliged the great Mithridates to confess, that he had found him to be an abler general than any of those concerning whom he had read †. The example, I own,

* Partim in percunctando a peritis, partim in rebus gestis legendis.

† Hunc a se majorem ducem cognitum, quam quenquam eorum quos legisset.

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is trite; but it is taken from an author who cannot be too often quoted; and I am perſuaded your Lordſhip will review the whole paſſage, at the beginning of the ſecond Book of Tully's Academical Queſtions, with a great deal of pl aſure.

To this I might add a numerous liſt of other examples, but I am perſuaded you are already convinced how much a careful and judicious ſtudy of the conduct of others, as exhibited in hiſtory, may enable us to act in a proper manner: permit me only to mention one modern, as I did one antient example of this truth: does not Europe at preſent, with admiration, behold the conduct of a great prince and general, who prepared himſelf for illuſtrious actions by indefatigable ſtudy, particularly of hiſtory; and hath even ſhewn, that as he can perform actions which will for ever make a figure in the annals of mankind, ſo he can relate * thoſe which were performed by others, in a truly maſterly manner?

* Memoires de Brandenburg.

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BEGINNING to act our parts in life, without enquiring how others have trode the ſtage before us, is as abſurd, as to travel to a foreign country without knowing any thing of the language or manners of the people whom we are to viſit, and will expoſe us to as many improprieties of conduct, and errors in judgment. How much quicker muſt his improvement be, and with how much greater certainty and facility muſt he make obſervations about any country, who is acquainted with its language, geography, cuſtoms and hiſtory, than he who ſets out unſkilled, and ignorant of all theſe things? Your Lordſhip will readily agree with me that the difference muſt be great; juſt ſuch a difference is there between him who ventures to act his part in the world, ignorant of every thing that has happened before him, and one who has joined to a knowledge of arts and ſciences, a knowledge of hiſtory, of the moſt remarkable actions which men have performed, of the characters of thoſe who performed them, of the ſprings which gave riſe

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to thoſe actions, and of the conſequences which were derived from them, either to the actors themſelves, to their country, or to the world.

I obſerved before, that ſome knowledge of Hiſtory is expected from every one who is of a rank above that of the loweſt mechanic, but it is not neceſſary for every one, who is above that rank, to be equally well acquainted with it. Some may read the tranſactions of former ages, to entertain and unbend their minds, after a ſtudious application to the proper buſineſs of their different profeſſions; ſome may do it to amuſe themſelves, and to acquire ſuch a ſhare of knowledge as may make them entertaining companions, and fit them for the converſation of men of ſenſe and learning. But, my Lord, you will be convinced that Hiſtory is the proper ſtudy of a nobleman, if you reflect that it is principally taken up in relating great actions, or the actions of great men.

THE chief ſubjects of Hiſtory, are ſuch events as peculiarly intereſt the ſuperior part of mankind, and in producing or preventing which, their ſtation obliges them to have ſome ſhare. The riſe and fall of kingdoms and ſtates, the eſtabliſhment of liberty and laws, or the encroachments of ſlavery and deſpotiſm, the flouriſhing of arts and ſciences, or the prevalence of ignorance and barbarity; the enervating effects of luxury and vice, or the happy influence of temperance and virtue: Theſe, my Lord, are the contents of the hiſtoric page, and in theſe men of quality and fortune are deeply intereſted, as their conduct muſt neceſſarily have great influence in promoting the grandeur and happineſs, or preventing the fall and miſery of their country. A man of fortune and rank cannot poſſibly be an idle ſpectator of human affairs; one way or other he muſt do good or harm. He can never be ſo retired as not to have ſome influence; and indeed when he wholly abſtracts himſelf, and becomes entirely regardleſs how affairs are managed, he not only acts a mean, but in ſome meaſure,

meaſure, a criminal part, as every nobleman is born to take a ſhare in governing the world, and by becoming quite careleſs of its concerns, he, as it were, forſakes and neglects that poſt, which it was his duty to watch and guard.

IF then hiſtory chiefly relates ſuch actions, as the firſt men of a country have had, and muſt have, a principal ſhare in; when a young nobleman is reading hiſtory, tracing back the great events and revolutions of human affairs to their ſprings and cauſes, conſidering the characters of legiſlators and heroes, and comparing what they did with their various methods of acting, he is as much buſied and employed in ſtudying his own profeſſion, as a watchmaker, who is viewing the machinery of a clock, and conſidering its ſprings and movements; or an anatomiſt, who is diſſecting a human body, and obſerving the uſe of all its parts, and how they produce thoſe effects for which nature intended them; a knowledge of the individual human frame is not more the anatomiſt's buſineſs, than that of the

the whole complex political body of mankind is the buſineſs, and ought to be the ſtudy of every one who is born to a ſuperior rank in any country; but chiefly, my Lord, in a free country, where all authority does not center in one perſon, but where every member of the commonwealth has ſome influence according to his rank; thoſe of your quality are born to be ſenators, counſellors, and guardians of the dignities and prerogatives of the ſovereign, and of the privileges of the people. In ſuch a country, and ſuch a one is Great Britain, 'tis more eſpecially the duty of a nobleman to ſtudy Hiſtory, as by it alone, he can learn how tyrants have endeavoured to ſap the foundations of liberty, by what methods they have attempted to enſlave their ſubjects, and by what means ſubjects have been enabled to reſiſt their lawleſs attempts, to ſecure their own freedom, and fix their rights upon more determinate and laſting foundations.

WHENCE, but from the ſtudy of Hiſtory, can your Lordſhip acquire ſuch a fund of know-

knowledge as will enable you to be an inſtructive and perſuaſive ſpeaker in the Britiſh ſenate? 'Tis a common opinion that we muſt be born poets, but that we may become orators; "naſcimur poetæ, fimus oratores." And undoubtedly though to become a perfect orator, one muſt be endued by nature with a genius ſuperior to that of the bulk of men, yet pains and induſtry may make any one of a good judgment and ordinary imagination a tolerable ſpeaker, eſpecially if he begins to improve himſelf when young: and how can this be better done than by making ourſelves maſters of the great events, and of the principal characters, which are handed down to us in hiſtory. This is one of thoſe ways by which one may become an orator, and lay in ſuch a ſtore of knowledge, as will be ready at hand almoſt on all occaſions. "Condo et "compono quæ mox depromere poſſim"---- may with great propriety be applied by a young nobleman to himſelf, when he is employed in ſtudying Hiſtory.

If one makes himſelf maſter of his ſubject, and has his mind ſtocked with ideas proper to be brought out, it will not be found ſo difficult, as ſome may imagine, to expreſs them in a proper manner: for as Horace, whom I beg leave to quote once more to you, has it, verba---prævisam rem haud invita ſe-" quentur; which may ſurely as well be ſaid of a public ſpeaker, as of a poet.

But Hiſtory will not only furniſh you with the beſt materials and ground-work of public ſpeaking; it will alſo preſent you with the nobleſt models: not even the rapid oratory of Demoſthenes, nor that flowing eloquence which charms us in Tully's Orations, exceed ſome of thoſe ſpeeches which we find in Livy, Saluſt, and other hiſtorians. Beſides, thoſe fine ſpeeches, which we meet with when reading Hiſtory, have this additional advantage, that we come to read them at a time, when the hiſtorian has intereſted us in thoſe events which gave riſe to them, and when our imaginations are warmed, and receive a deeper im-

impreſſion. Thus, being more ſtruck, we remember them better, and remember them too in ſuch a way, that we can eaſily make uſe of them on a proper occaſion; for the hiſtorical narration making us acquainted with the events of the times, and the oration being a ſort of commentary upon the facts and circumſtances of the hiſtory, they mutually throw light upon each other, and enable us to form a more certain judgment of the ſubject we are conſidering.

'TIS not only in claſſic hiſtories that we meet with excellent ſpeeches, even modern hiſtory will preſent you with ſuch as will delight and inſtruct you; but chiefly in the hiſtory of your own country you will find, both in its remote and latter periods, ſuch ſpeeches as neither Greece nor Rome would have had any reaſon to have been aſhamed of. Liberty, my Lord, is an animating ſubject; and as it has warmed the breaſt of many Britiſh ſenators, ſo what they have ſpoke in the cauſe of freedom has ſtirred up the patriot flame in the boſoms of others, and in-

ſpired them to purſue the beſt meaſures in ſupport of the honour of their king, and the welfare of their country.

THUS, my Lord, a young nobleman has every motive to ſtudy Hiſtory: his own amuſement, the good of his country, and what has always great influence with a virtuous mind, the applauſe of his countrymen, by being an ornament to his own rank, a wiſe counſellor to his king, and an able guardian of the rights of the people.

I am, &c.

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LETTER III.

On the STUDY of HISTORY.

MY LORD,

MEN are ſo much the ſame in all ages, and in all countries, that the hiſtory of whatever nation you read, will afford you ſome opportunities of comparing what happened there, with what has been tranſacted in your own country, and of forming proper principles for the regulation of your future conduct: though the nearer the conſtitution, climate, and ſituation of the people, whoſe hiſtory you read, approach to the circumſtances of your own country, the more ample field will there be for drawing compariſons, and for making uſeful and intereſting obſervations.

BEFORE one begins to ſtudy the hiſtory of any particular nation in the detail, a general idea of the hiſtory of mankind at large ought to be acquired. This opens the mind, removes prejudices, and convinces us how ill founded thoſe extravagant ideas are, which moſt young people are apt to entertain of the ſuperior grandeur and conſequence of their own times, and of that part of the world in which their own country is ſituated.

WHEN your Lordſhip views in hiſtory the mighty actions of the great Empires which flouriſhed in the moſt remote periods of antiquity, you will be aſtoniſhed at the grandeur and virtue of the antients, and be almoſt tempted to look down with contempt upon the littleneſs of modern times. There is nothing tends more to enlarge our ideas, than a view of the magnificence of the antient world: the nearer we approach to that period, when men were firſt placed on this earth to be its principal inhabitants, the more ſtriking pictures do we meet with of that grand ſim-

ſimplicity, which is the characteriſtic of the primitive ages of the world.

THE firſt, the moſt venerable, and ſacred of all books, gives us the nobleſt repreſentations of the native ſimplicity of the original fathers of the human race. This informs us, and all other hiſtories confirm the truth, that men and empires firſt appeared in the eaſt. Here flouriſhed thoſe heroes and demi-gods of whom the antients have ſaid ſo much, and with whoſe exploits one would chooſe to be acquainted, was it for no other reaſon, but that we might be able to read the antient poets with taſte, and to diſtinguiſh the ingenious remains of antient art. This, we muſt be altogether unable to do, without a competent knowledge of the hiſtory of thoſe fabulous and heroic ages; from which painters and ſtatuaries have been ſupplied with the moſt beautiful, and the greateſt number of the ſubjects that have employed their various talents, and which are the foundation of the nobleſt paintings, and moſt exquiſite ſtatues that adorn the world, and are the admiration

all good judges of the fine arts. A gentleman who ſhould ſeem to know little about the ſubjects whence theſe are taken, would make but a poor figure, and have no great reaſon to value himſelf upon having had a liberal education.

Besides, there is ſomething grand and pleaſing in the ſtories of thoſe fabulous times: the labours of Hercules, Theſeus and Jaſon, the juſtice of Minos and Radamanthus, and the various atchievements of ſo many others, pleaſe the mind, and amply repay that ſmall portion of time which is ſpent in becoming tolerably well acquainted with their ſtories. For, to ſpend a deal of time in grammatical and critical reſearches concerning their genealogies, and the diſputable parts of their hiſtory, is perhaps a waſting of time in any one; but would be much more ſo in a young nobleman, than in a profeſſed grammarian or antiquary.

The great empires which flouriſhed in the eaſt, the Egyptian, the Aſſyrian, the Babylonian,

Ionian, and the Perſian, will undoubtedly claim your attention, afford you much amuſement, and ſurprize you with the accounts of many of thoſe great exploits, which their kings and princes performed, of the great works which they executed, and of thoſe ſtupendous monuments which they erected, and which ſtill remain to be the wonder of our times, and amazing proofs of what great undertakings the antients were capable of attempting and finiſhing.

BUT whatever amuſement and inſtruction the hiſtory of thoſe eaſtern empires may afford you, and however proper it be, that you ſhould become ſomewhat acquainted with their hiſtory, it would be far from being ſo, that you ſhould ſpend as much time and dwell as long upon it, as upon that of other nations, which will afford you far more inſtruction, and the circumſtances of whoſe affairs will appear far more intereſting to a Britiſh nobleman: for, leaving thoſe eaſtern countries behind you, and following arts and ſciences in their courſe weſtward, you will naturally come

come to Greece, a country, which though of no great extent, compared to thoſe vaſt empires, yet, under the auſpicious influence of freedom, made far greater improvements in arts and ſciences, and civil life.

THE hiſtory of Greece claims your attention on many accounts: one may with great propriety addreſs to young noblemen of your rank, that advice which Horace gives in his art of poetry,

--------Vos exemplaria Græca
Nocturna verſate manu, verſate diurna.

THE Greeks were a free people, and among them we find models of governments inclining to all the different kinds, Monarchy, Ariſtocracy, and Democracy. You will ſee what tended to preſerve theſe conſtitutions in their firſt purity, what tended to overturn them, and at laſt bring ruin upon the whole country: you will have various occaſions of applying what happened in Greece to what has happened, or may happpen, in Great Britain:

Britain: for though none of their governments was exactly the ſame with ours, yet in all countries, where liberty prevails, there are ſo many reſemblances and ſimilar circumſtances, that the hiſtory of one free country becomes peculiarly intereſting to the inhabitants of another, eſpecially to ſuch of them, as by their ſtation are called upon to have ſome ſhare in the government.

BESIDES, that liberty which flouriſhed in Greece, inſpired the people with a quickneſs, elegance and vigour of genius, more than has yet appeared in any other nation. Thus not only their ſtateſmen and warriors acted with wiſdom and vigour, but their philoſophers reaſoned acutely, their poets were inſpired with a truly poetic ſpirit, their artiſts executed with genius and elegance, and their hiſtorians narrated the actions of their countrymen in the nobleſt manner.

THE hiſtory of Greece, therefore, is particularly inſtructive and agreeable, not only

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on account of the events which are the ſubject of it, but alſo the manner in which thoſe events are narrated. When we read the beſt Grecian Hiſtorians, the writer's art makes us fancy we are acquainted with the perſons whoſe characters he draws; and the power of imagination carries us back, and makes us, as if we were members of ſome one of the Grecian ſtates, become intereſted in its affairs, anxious for the fate of a battle, and concerned for the effect which the harangues of ſome of their orators ſhall have upon the aſſembly of the people.

And here, my Lord, allow me to make this obſervation, that to be converſant in the Hiſtory of thoſe free ſtates, to know how their affairs were managed, and how their popular aſſemblies were influenced, is, as it were, being acquainted with buſineſs, and tranſacting affairs in theory and ſpeculation, before one comes to be concerned in ſuch matters in life and practice: on which account a ſtudy of the Grecian and Roman Hiſtories, which commonly go hand in hand, ought

ought very juſtly to make, as they generally do, a conſiderable part of a young nobleman's education.

The Hiſtory of the Roman people is full of the moſt intereſting and ſurprizing events, that are exhibited to us in the annals of human kind; whether we conſider their ſmall and inconſiderable beginnings, or the extenſive Empire to which they at laſt attained; whether we conſider the internal conſtitution of their government, or the mighty provinces they ſubdued, and the manner in which they civilized and incorporated them with the main body of the Empire. No Hiſtory is more fertile in grand events, or preſents us with greater examples of bravery, patriotiſm, and integrity of manners, or of wiſdom in debate, manly eloquence and conſummate art in managing the heads, and influencing the hearts of a free people.

The Romans too have produced a number of writers, who in the nobleſt manner have tranſmitted down to poſterity the wiſe conduct

duct and brave exploits of their renowned countrymen. There are two or three of their Hiſtorians, who alone, if ſtudied judiciouſly, and with a true ſpirit of making obſervations, might furniſh out an excellent ſyſtem of political knowledge, and afford examples of almoſt every thing that can happen in ſuch a country as Great Britain. Livy, Saluſt, Tacitus, authors, who, though they write in very different manners, are yet each of them excellent in their own way, and have been the delight and admiration of all good judges from their own, down to our times, and will continue to be ſo, while genius and letters are cultivated among men.

WHETHER the Grecian or the Roman Hiſtorians are the beſt, is perhaps doubtful, and is certainly immaterial to be determined. Quintilian, one of the moſt maſterly critics who ever wrote, is of opinion, that his countrymen, in writing hiſtory, were not inferior to the Greeks *, and that one need not be afraid to oppoſe Saluſt to Thucydides, and Livy to

* Hiſtoriâ non ceſſerit Græcis.

Hero-

Herodotus. No Hiſtorian is more worthy of your ſtudy than Livy: the grandeur of his ſubject, the length of that period of time which his narration comprehends, the richneſs *, the beauty and purity of his ſtyle, his art in intereſting and moving the affections and paſſions, and that admirable eloquence with which he tranſmits to us the principal of thoſe orations which were ſpoken, or which he ſuppoſes were ſo, on the moſt remarkable occaſions, which occur in the courſe of his narration, make every one of taſte agree with the critic whom I juſt now mennioned, in allowing him to be eloquent in his ſpeeches beyond expreſſion †, and recommend him as one of the beſt authors for a young nobleman to ſtudy, and make himſelf thoroughly maſter of.

THE comprehenſive brevity of Saluſt, thoſe ſententious obſervations and moral maxims with which he interſperſes his writings, and

* Livii lactea ubertas. *Quint.*

† In concionibus ſupra quam narrari poteſt eloquentem.

which

which render them peculiarly animated and inſtructing, cannot fail of making us highly value thoſe precious remains which we have of him, and regret that the greateſt part of his works is loſt. Every line of him that we have entire, affords matter for reflection, and the oftner you read him, the more you will be perſuaded that his writings, which unfortunately are ſo ſmall, contain a vaſt fund of entertainment and inſtruction.

We may very properly characteriſe Tacitus, one of the deepeſt geniuſes that ever appeared among men, by theſe lines in which Shakeſpear deſcribes Caſſius.

> He is a great obſerver; and he looks
> Quite through the deeds of men----
> Seldom he ſmiles ------

Seldom indeed does he preſent to us the ſmiling ſide; but often expoſes to our view the dark and gloomy ſhades of that picture which he draws of human affairs; like the Duke de la Rochefoucault, who is known to have been

a great admirer of him, he is by many people thought too ſevere in his cenſures, and too apt to attribute actions to bad motives. But the great depravity and corruption of the times in which he lived, and of thoſe, whoſe annals and Hiſtory he writes, may plead an excuſe for his, perhaps too refined, ſuſpicion concerning the intereſted motives of human conduct: and his maſterly obſervations, his wiſe maxims, and that conciſe energy, with which he draws the characters of men, and deſcribes the manners and cuſtoms of nations, have placed him in the Temple of Immortality, and will make him for ever be regarded as one of the ableſt and moſt inſtructive of all writers.

I HAVE mentioned theſe three, becauſe they are the flower of the Roman Hiſtorians, and have been the admiration of almoſt all the great men, who have been eminent in civil life ſince their times. If you enquire into the characters of thoſe who have made the moſt ſhining figure in the Britiſh ſenate, you will find that moſt of them were able

maſters of claſſical learning, that they were well acquainted with theſe Hiſtorians in particular, and that from them they have drawn many examples and maxims, which they have with great propriety applied to the circumſtances of their own country.

It is the obſervation of a polite writer *, that it is unpardonable even in the ladies not to be acquainted with the Greek and Roman Hiſtories. Whether a great many ladies of faſhion are utterly unacquainted with them, and think it no reproach to be ſo, I ſhall not ſay; but for a young gentleman, who has had a liberal education, and can have recourſe to the original authors, to be ignorant in theſe articles, would imply a moſt reproachful negligence and want of inclination to improve himſelf. For though one may acquire a tolerable knowledge of Greek and Roman affairs from modern tranſlations and compilations, yet they, who are able to go to the original fountains, from which the beſt of theſe moderns drew their knowledge, will

* Mr. Hume, Mor. and Polit. Eſſays.

find

find what a difference there is between that pure water, which one drinks at the ſpring-head, and that which, by running a long way through various channels, has become confuſed and muddy by a mixture of leſs pure ſtreams. Indeed the ſtudy of ſome modern works will greatly facilitate your knowledge of theſe Hiſtories, if read along and compared with the original authors. Hook's Roman Hiſtory, ſo far as it has gone, and we hope he will carry it down farther, with the writings of ſome others concerning Roman affairs, do honour to the Engliſh language; and there are ſeveral French writers, who are extremely valuable. One * genius indeed of that nation has, beyond all others, in the moſt maſterly manner, pointed out the cauſes of that grandeur and empire to which the Romans arrived, as well as thoſe which at laſt occaſioned their declenſion and fall.

AND here I beg leave to obſerve, that nothing claims your attention more, when you are reading the Hiſtory of any nation, than

* Preſident Monteſquieu.

thoſe circumſtances by which it became great, rich, and free, and thoſe by which it loſt its grandeur, riches, and freedom. What has happened in one nation, may happen in another: if the Romans, by bravery, by temperance, by a warm love of their country, of liberty and truth, attained to greatneſs and empire: if, when they became effeminate and luxurious, if, when a regard to private intereſt and pleaſure prevailed over that of their country and freedom, they fell a prey to the ambition of an enterprizing genius, and at laſt became the conqueſt of thoſe hardy and incorrupt people, whom they deſpiſed and contemptuouſly named Barbarians, their fate may ſerve as a light to warn others from ſtriking upon the ſame rocks, and ought to inſpire every man of influence in any country to ſtudy with attention thoſe remarkable changes of manners and of governments which are exhibited to us in Hiſtory, and to reflect upon their cauſes and conſequences, that he may be enabled to conduct himſelf in ſuch a manner as may beſt prevent his own country from arriving at ſuch a ſtate as has

has never failed to bring ruin upon others *.

THE downfal of that mighty Empire, which the Roman bravery had been ſo many ages in erecting, as it was effected by thoſe ſwarms of uncivilized and hardy Barbarians who came from the northern countries, ſo it overrun Europe with the unpoliſhed and barbarous manners of thoſe people, who, to uſe the words of a maſterly writer †, "under the "ſeveral names of Goths, Vandals, Huns, "Bulgars, Francs, Saxons, and many others, "broke in at ſeveral times and places upon "the ſeveral Provinces of the Roman Em-"pire, like ſo many tempeſts, tore in pieces "the whole fabrick of that government, "framed many new ones in its room, chang-"ed the inhabitants, language, cuſtoms, laws,

* Hoc illud eſt præcipue in cognitione rerum ſalubre ac frugiferum omnis te exempli documenta in illuſtri poſita monumento intueri: inde tibi tuæque reipublicæ, quod imitere, capias; inde fœdum inceptu, fœdum exitu, quod vites. *Liv.*

† Sir William Temple.

" the uſual names of places, and of men, " and even the very face of nature, where " they came, and planted new nations and " dominions in their room."

THE view of thoſe governments which were eſtabliſhed upon the ruin of the Roman Empire; and the Hiſtory of the people who lived in them, will afford you but ſmall entertainment; and that knowledge which we can acquire about them, unintereſting and inſipid as it is, muſt originally be ſought for in the ridiculous and ungracious annals and chronicles of ſuperſtitious Monks. So that as the Greek and Roman Hiſtories, as I obſerved before, claim your attention on a double account, both the grandeur of the ſubject, and the elegant manner in which they are wrote; one may perhaps have a double excuſe for being leſs attentive to the Hiſtory of thoſe times, and leſs careful of being intimately acquainted with the manners and atchievements of ſuch rough and ſavage people.

AND

And yet, my Lord, one would not chooſe to be altogether ignorant of the tranſactions of the dark ages, or to leave ſo great a blank in our knowledge of human affairs. Every perſon who would wiſh to be acquainted with the ſource and original of our laws and cuſtoms, and to form a general idea of our Hiſtory, muſt go back to thoſe diſtant times, as we like to look at old tapeſtry which recalls to our minds the modes and cuſtoms of our forefathers. "Il faut convenir que tout "homme qui ſera curieux de remonter a la "ſource de nos loix, ou de nos uſages, et qui "voudra ſe former une ideé generale de "notre Hiſtoire, aimera a repaſſer ſur ces "tems eloignés, comme on aime a voir d' "anciennes tapiſſeries, qui nous rappellent "les modes et les coutumes des nos peres," as the accurate and ſenſible author of the Chronological Hiſtory of France obſerves, with reſpect to the Hiſtory of his own country, and which is no leſs true with reſpect to that of ours.

'Tis by a knowledge of the governments which were eſtabliſhed, and the cuſtoms which prevailed in Europe during thoſe periods, that we can alone acquire a juſt idea of the various conſtitutions, under which the European nations now live, and the laws and cuſtoms by which they are at preſent governed: for they may be traced up to thoſe times, and however much they have been changed and altered, as choice, accident, climate, or the genius of ſome leading characters gave an opportunity at different times and in different nations, they derive their original from the manners which prevailed in Europe in the barbarous ages. Even that noble ſyſtem of Britiſh liberty, which has been ſo many ages in perfecting, owes its original to ſome of the laws and cuſtoms of thoſe wild and ſavage nations; this beautiful ſyſtem was found in the woods: "ce beau ſyſteme a eté trouvé dans "les bois", to uſe the words of preſident Monteſquieu, in that chapter of the Spirit of Laws, in which he delineates the Engliſh conſtitution, alluding to ſome of its nobleſt inſtitutions,

ſtitutions, which are evidently derived from the manners of the antient Germans, who lived not in poliſhed cities, but were ſcattered about in an uncultivated and woody country.

Besides, the Hiſtory of the various arts, which, in thoſe dark ages, the haughty tyrants of the Roman See, made uſe of to acquire and maintain an unjuſt and pernicious ſupremacy over all the chriſtian world, and to keep mankind bound in the chains of ignorance and ſuperſtition, though it offers to our view a picture of human affairs, that is gloomy and diſagreeable to the laſt degree, may be of conſiderable uſe, by raiſing in our minds a deteſtation of ſuch a tyrannical ſuperſtition, which almoſt extinguiſhed every generous principle of the human heart, and ſo reſtrained and debaſed the genius and underſtandings of men, that there remains no monument of thoſe ages, which does not give us reaſon to conclude that the generality of Europe was then as groſly ſtupid and

and barbarous, as the moſt remote and unpoliſhed parts of it are at this day.

We need hardly indeed wonder that they, who muſt have been conſcious of perverting a god-like and humane religion to the moſt ungod-like, and moſt inhuman purpoſes, *loved darkneſs rather than light*, and ſtrove hard to prevent thoſe clouds of ignorance and error which overwhelmed the minds of men, from being diſpelled. They knew well that, when theſe ſhould be removed, the craft and wickedneſs of their ſchemes would be ſeen through, and the world no longer kept under ſubjection to their tyrannic yoke. In fact, this happened; for when ſeveral concurring circumſtances, but eſpecially the invention of the art of printing, which was found out about the middle of the fifteenth century, made it impoſſible to keep mankind longer in the dark; the genius of Europe ſhone forth, arts and ſciences began to flouriſh, the precious remains of antiquity were ſtudied, the ſpirit of the antients was admired and imitated;

imitated; ſuperſtition could not ſtand before ſuch opponents; idle legends fell into diſcredit, the written oracles of heaven were rationally examined; men found out by them what was truly of divine and what of human origin, and religion was, in a great part of Europe, reformed according to the unerring ſtandard of ſacred writ.

THE Hiſtory of Europe, from the time of the reformation, and for above a century before it, becomes peculiarly intereſting both on account of the ſuperior knowledge and improvements which have prevailed ſince that time, and alſo becauſe the general policy of Europe, and of its particular governments began to change nearly at that period: the authority of ſovereigns, and the rights of the bulk of the people gained ground, and were better aſcertained: the haughty pride of inferior tyrants ſubmitted to the power of kings, and the people ſupported and protected by their ſovereigns, aſſumed a ſpirit which diſdained to be oppreſſed and trampled upon

upon by thoſe to whom formerly they belonged as mere ſlaves. The face of Europe was changed, and her governments gradually took that form in which they have ſince appeared; in ſome of them the improvements were greater, in others leſs; in ſome they were more rapid, in others more ſlow: in ſome the power, of which the grandees were deprived, fell principally into the hands of the king, as in France; in others, the bulk of the people acquired a conſiderable ſhare of it, as in England.

To point out the methods by which thoſe alterations were brought about, and to explain how the intereſt both of kings and people concurred to prompt them to ſet bounds to the power of thoſe, who, being abſolute in their own domains, could be controuled by no law but that of force, and were only obedient to that ſtate to which they owed allegiance, when it was their intereſt to be ſo, or when they durſt not rebel: to point out how the natural ſituation of one coun-

country, tending to enlarge its commerce and enrich the bulk of the people, made the commons acquire a ſway, which was not intended by thoſe who broke the power of the great Barons; and to ſhew how in another the military diſpoſition of the ſtate, and their ſituation with reſpect to neighbouring powers, retarded the progreſs of trade, and by keeping the people poor, prevented them from becoming ſharers of that authority which their kings aſſumed, would far exceed the bounds of a letter, and has already been often done in a maſterly manner.

President Monteſquieu, who has well merited the noble title of legiſlator of the world*, hath with his uſual abilities traced out and developped in his Spirit of Laws the cauſes of the great changes, which have happened in the governments and circumſtances of every nation of the world: no book is

* L'eſprit des loix eſt le code de tous les peuples, et le preſident de Monteſquieu eſt le legiſlateur de l'univers. *Mes Penſées.*

more worthy of your ſtudy, none contains a greater fund of knowledge proper for a Britiſh nobleman. Henaut, in the concluding remarks on his hiſtory of France, hath in a few moſt inſtructive pages explained the means by which the French Monarchy acquired its preſent form; and, though he confines himſelf to the police of his own country, naturally leads us to form proper reflections upon that of others. There are few things wrote with more judgment and conciſe neatneſs, or that in ſuch ſmall bounds preſent us with ſo many uſeful ideas, as his Chronological Hiſtory of France.

The Hiſtory of one's own country claims, indeed, a ſuperior regard to that of any other, eſpecially thoſe periods of it, in which its government underwent conſiderable alterations; when its civil or religious policy took a different form; when thoſe privileges, which men hold ſo dear, were acquired; and when ſuperſtition and tyranny, which had long made mankind groan under their oppreſſive yoke,

yoke, gave way to the happy influence of true religion and freedom. By ſtudying how theſe advantages and privileges were acquired, we can beſt learn how they may be maintained, and, perhaps (for there never was a perfect human ſyſtem of any kind) improved and confirmed.

How much religious and civil freedom are worth preſerving, and what a glorious influence they have upon human affairs, you will be convinced by comparing what Europe has been ſince the reformation with what it was before that period; and that the improvements in every kind, which have taken place ſince that time, are chiefly owing to this cauſe will appear evident, if you reflect that thoſe improvements have only taken place in countries where men have thrown off the papal yoke, or where there are great numbers of the people who would wiſh, and have attempted, to do it. "It has been ſaid that "without Deſcartes, Newton would perhaps "never have been; it might have been ſaid "with greater propriety that without Luther

"and

" and Calvin, Deſcartes would perhaps never " have been *.

" VOLTAIRE has more than once taken no- " tice, that it was a pity ſuch middling ge- " niuſes as Luther and Calvin ſhould have " made ſo many proſelytes, while Locke " and Newton have made ſo few: but he for- " gets to obſerve that Locke and Newton " have had no diſciples but in thoſe countries " where Luther and Calvin have been fol- " lowed, and that they are unknown where- " ever the doctrine of thoſe middling geniuſes " has been proſcribed.

* On dit que ſans Deſcartes, Newton n'auroit peut-être pas eté, et je dis que Deſcartes n'auroit peutêtre pas eté ſans Luther et Calvin.

M. de Voltaire a dit et redit qu'il etoit triſte que d'auſſi mediores eſprits que Luther et Calvin euſſent faits tant de Proſelytes, tandis que Locke and Newton en ont fait ſi peu. Mais il ne prend pas garde que Locke et Newton n'ont eu des ſectateurs que dans les pais ou Luther et Calvin ont eté ſuivis, et qu'ils ſont inconnus par tout ou la doctrine de ces eſprits mediocres a etè proſcrite. *Mes Penſées*, CXLIV.

THERE

THESE are the words of a ſmart writer; and undoubtedly that rational inquiry, which the reformation not only permits but approves of, has had, and muſt have, a wonderful influence in enlarging the genius and underſtandings of men.

FROM this period men gradually improved in real knowledge, ſtudied nature both phyſical and moral in a more manly and rational manner; and at different times, by the ſtrength of ſome ſuperior geniuſes, whoſe minds were now at liberty to follow truth wherever ſhe ſhould lead them, great lights were ſtruck out. The bewildering methods of reaſoning taught by the ſchool-men of the dark ages began to fall into diſrepute: men could not, however, all at once throw off the yoke of ſcholaſtic fopperies. One folly gave way, and then another, till at laſt a profound genius of this country (Lord Bacon) taught men how they ſhould ſtudy nature, and ſome time after, Sir Iſaac Newton unravelled the ſyſtem of the univerſe, and explained its laws with a penetration in-

finitely beyond what had been done before, or, indeed, could have been conceived before his time; guided by uncommon modeſty, as well as judgment and genius, he built his ſyſtem upon ſuch experimental principles as will ſtand the teſt of ages, and not, like the fanciful ſchemes of other philoſophers, give way to more faſhionable dreams. At the ſame time, mechanics were ſtudied and applied to the purpoſes of civil life: by this means labour was made eaſier, and men were enabled to make a better uſe of thoſe materials with which this earth is ſo plentifully provided for their comfort and pleaſure. Navigation was improved, and an intercourſe between the different nations of the world rendered more ſafe and eaſy. Society was gradually more poliſhed, and the manners of men civilized; the groſſneſs of the preceding ages was cleared away, and that of Lewis XIV. of the revolution, of Sir Iſaac Newton, or call it by what other name you pleaſe, was ſo much refined, as to claim the privilege of being ranked among thoſe few which have merited to be called golden

ones

ones better than that which actually was ſo.

IN ſuch enlightened times has your Lordſhip been born; perhaps the golden age is not yet over; arts and ſciences are not, we hope yet ready to take their flight to regions hitherto not ſo highly favoured by the muſes as this iſland. Let us however beware of treating them with neglect; if they be diſdained or undervalued, they will fly to more worthy votaries, accompanied with every thing that is ingenious and valuable, and leave nothing behind them but ignorance and barbariſm. Then will Britain be, what it once was, the deſpiſed region of fierceneſs and barbarity, and not the envied ſeat of liberty and knowledge. The very idea is ſhocking enough to inſpire every one to do all he can to prevent or retard ſo diſmal a change. The higher one's rank is, the more one can do. But here I have done; your Lordſhip does not ſtand in need of any arguments to prompt you to do all you

can to prevent your country from falling again into ſuch a ſtate of barbarity, as Hiſtory repreſents it once to have been over-run with.

I am, &c.

LET-

LETTER IV.

On BIOGRAPHY.

MY LORD,

THE pleaſure your Lordſhip takes in reading the lives of illuſtrious men, is a very happy and a very natural one. As you find it an agreeable and entertaining amuſement, ſo nothing can tend more to your improvement and inſtruction. We become intereſted in thoſe perſons who make a figure in hiſtory, and have performed actions worthy of being tranſmitted down to poſterity and of being admired; we have a natural curioſity to be acquainted with the moſt remarkable circumſtances of their lives, and to know what their conduct was in private as well as in public, as men as well as citizens; but this curioſity, the rules of compo-

ſition permit not an hiſtorian, who propoſes to write the general Hiſtory of any country, to gratify. As his ſubject is the general Hiſtory of the country, that of individuals can only be brought into it ſo far as they had an influence upon public affairs, or helped to bring about thoſe events which are the ſubject of the hiſtoric page. The juſtneſs of this rule may be illuſtrated by the analogy it holds with what is obſerved in the compoſition of other works.

In painting, the artiſt pitches upon ſome particular action to be the ſubject of his piece, and no circumſtances can with propriety be brought into that piece, which are unneceſſary to add ſtrength and ſpirit to the principal ſubject. A picture repreſenting the choice of Hercules can with propriety admit of no circumſtance of that hero's life, but that ſingle one of his being addreſſed by the goddeſſes of virtue and pleaſure, exhorted by the one to purſue the manly road of temperance and virtue, allured by the other to follow the luxurious paths of indolence and vice: every other

other part of the Hiſtory of Hercules is foreign to the ſubject, and if brought into that piece, would break the unity of the deſign, divert the attention from the main ſubject, and render the work irregular and abſurd.

In a tragedy which ſhould have for its ſubject, the death of Cato, none of the actions of that great man could with propriety be exhibited upon the ſtage, but thoſe, which accompanied his death, and which have an effect to render that event more ſtriking.

The rule holds equally well in Hiſtory; nothing can with propriety be brought into that of any particular nation, but what tends to give us a juſt idea of the genius, manners, and cuſtoms of the people, of their laws and conſtitution, of their exploits in war and policy in time of peace, or of whatever elſe is neceſſary to make us properly acquainted with their Hiſtory as a nation. The actions of particular men can be related only ſo far as

they had an influence upon the general affairs of their country; and no other part of their lives, however admirable and worthy of being known, falls properly under the notice and obſervation of a writer who propoſes to relate the Hiſtory of a nation in general.

But your Lordſhip will readily own, that thoſe actions of men, which have an influence upon public affairs, are not the only actions worthy of being known, and that the more private circumſtances of their lives are often no leſs ſo, nay perhaps are more intereſting, and offer to our obſervation more frequent occaſions of improvement and inſtruction. Hence the utility of Biography appears, which, having the Hiſtory of an individual for its ſubject, with propriety relates every remarkable circumſtance of the life of that individual, conſiders his private as well as his public conduct; his behaviour among a circle of friends, as well as his appearances in a public aſſembly; views him at the head of a fa-

family, as well as at that of an army; follows him from the ſenate-houſe to his private ſtudy; and in a word, endeavours to find out and exhibit the real character and portrait of the man as well as of the citizen.

The happineſs of the world depends no leſs upon the conduct of men in their private than in their public capacities: indeed they who have many opportunities of being uſeful and of doing good in the one, have generally no fewer in the other. They who have it in their power to become eminently ſerviceable to their king and country by unſhaken loyalty and patriotiſm, have commonly at the ſame time a large ſphere in which they may exerciſe their private virtues, and muſt become a bleſſing or a ſcourge, and contribute to the proſperity and happineſs, or to the diſtreſs and uneaſineſs of many of their fellow creatures. That ſpecies of hiſtory then, which can with propriety enlarge upon the private, benevolent, and amiable qualities of illuſtrious men; and by drawing an engaging picture of their virtues, incite

others

others to imitate them in their goodneſs, muſt certainly have a friendly influence upon human affairs, and be highly uſeful. They indeed muſt be inſenſible to every virtuous emotion, who have never felt their hearts fired with a love of virtue and an admiration of great and generous actions, when they were reading the hiſtory of great and good men wrote by an able Biographer.

To ſucceed well in Biography, conſiderable talents are required: the writer muſt have a genius that is quick, and ſenſibly ſtruck by ſuch circumſtances as are characteriſtic * of the perſon whoſe hiſtory he writes, and know

* In a performance, which the author modeſtly entitles a Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England, more light is thrown upon ſome characters in a few pages, by a judicious choice of a few diſtinguiſhing circumſtances, than had been done before in ſome volumes.

" J'aimerois mieux avoir fait l'hiſtoire de —— qui " n'a pas plus de dix pages, que la belle, l'admirable " l'immortelle hiſtoire de —— qui a dix gros volumes." *Mes Penſées*, CCXLV.

how to ſeparate theſe from ſuch as are common to him with a thouſand others. He muſt have that diſcernment which can look through the deeds of men, and is not apt to be impoſed upon by fallacious appearances: he muſt neither be enthuſiaſtically fond of his Hero, nor too cool in his intereſt: he muſt have that impartiality which is ſo rarely to be found in Biographers, eſpecially thoſe who write the lives of perſons who have been cotemporary with themſelves, or lived near their own times. If the life of one who lived in a diſtant period be the ſubject, much pains and accuracy are required in reading the authors of that age, and in ſearching thoſe antient monuments which are neceſſary to give a juſt idea of the ſubject, and to throw light upon it.

When I read the life of an illuſtrious man well wrote, and reflect what trouble it muſt have given the author to clear away a heap of rubbiſh that he might preſent us with an elegant work, I cannot but reckon myſelf obliged

obliged to one by whoſe labour I enjoy ſo inſtructive and ſo agreeable a pleaſure *.

I BELIEVE it will be found true by moſt readers, that they have ſeldom been more pleaſed, or leſs tired with any work, than when they were reading the life of a particular perſon, eſpecially if it was the life of one, whoſe turn of mind was ſomewhat ſimilar to their own; and I have often thought that it was a good way to find out one's genius, to obſerve what ſort of lives pleaſe us moſt, which we like beſt to talk of, and which make the ſtrongeſt impreſſion upon our minds. They who diſcover a greater admiration of the rapid and ungovernable bravery of a Charles XII. than of the ſedate and conſummate conduct of a Marlborough, and take more pleaſure in reading the hiſtory of ſuch as bear a nearer reſemblance to the Swede, than to the Engliſh hero, will pro-

* Ad res pulcherrimas, ex tenebris ad lucem erutas alieno labore deducimur. *Senec.*

bably

bably be found in fact more fit to head a desperate attack than to conduct a rational enterprize. They, who find themselves less tired when reading the life of an able and wise chancellor, or of a great and learned prelate, than of a celebrated general or commander, are, 'tis to be presumed, formed by nature to wear the sacred or civil gown with a better grace, than they could wield the general's staff. I believe, I may add, that those who are more charmed with accounts of such persons as lived in elegant retirement, far removed from the hurry of courts and business, than of those who spend their lives amidst the bustle and intrigues of the world, will find themselves improperly placed, when they entirely forsake their more private way of life, and enter deeply into affairs and public management.

This then is one way by which we may find out what path our genius points out to us to pursue, what course it warns us not to follow, and makes us feel to be contrary to our natural disposition. Hence it appears ex-

extremely proper that young gentlemen ſhould have the lives of men of various characters put into their hands before they ſet out in life, that thus they may have an opportunity of diſcovering what beſt ſuits their own turn of mind; for ſuch as aſſume a character, that nature never gave them, will hardly ever make a figure in life, be happy in themſelves, or uſeful to the world.

But of all accounts of the actions of great men, thoſe which were wrote by the actors themſelves are the moſt uſeful and agreeable. Partiality natural to one's ſelf, may indeed ſometimes tempt the writer to varniſh over ſuch parts of his conduct as might appear diſhonourable, or render his fame leſs glorious; but that ſpirit which generally appears in them, that warmth with which a remembrance of what they once acted, inſpires the writers; and that intimate knowledge, which they muſt have of their ſubject, compenſate other diſadvantages, ſtrike the reader with greater force, and make him enter more feelingly into the intereſts of one who is both

both the actor and writer, than the leſs animated performances of compilators can poſſibly do.

Your Lordſhip will eaſily recall to your memory examples of this both among the antients and moderns. Who could have wrote the actions of Julius Cæſar with a thouſandth part of that eloquence and ſpirit that he himſelf does in his admired commentaries? or who could have made us follow Xenophon and his ten thouſand Greeks, with ſuch eager anxiety and attention, in that maſterly retreat which they made though a vaſt tract of country amidſt every diſadvantage and difficulty, as he himſelf has done, in his Anabaſis, with no leſs ſkill than he conducted the enterpriſe.

Among the moderns, we meet with many examples of memoirs of the lives of great men written by themſelves in the moſt lively and inſtructive manner. Need I mention Sully's Memoirs, from which one can certainly form a juſter

juſter idea of the great goodneſs, conſummate abilities, and heroic qualities of his maſter Henry IV. and of his own capacity and integrity, than can be done from any other of the numerous hiſtories of thoſe times. Cardinal de Retz, that great genius, puſhed headlong into affairs and intrigues of every kind by the active impetuoſity of his diſpoſition, has drawn in his memoirs, one of the ſtrongeſt portraits of an extraordinary character that the world ever ſaw. By fairly laying before us both his good and bad qualities, by expoſing his own foibles more freely than any one elſe could have done, as I have ſeen it ſomewhere obſerved, he hath made his faults uſeful to the world, and pointed out the dangers and vexatious conſequences, which attend that headſtrong ambition which can throw every thing into confuſion, but knows not how to quiet or compoſe the ſtorm it has raiſed; qui ſçait brouiller, mais pas denouer, as the French ſometimes expreſs themſelves when ſpeaking of ſuch characters: there are a great many other memoirs in ſeveral modern languages, which are extremely amuſing, and make

make us acquainted with the characters of ſeveral great men in a way that comes neareſt to perſonal intimacy.

Allow me to add as a proof of the agreeable and intereſting nature of this ſpecies of writing, that the mere Romance-writer finds no better method of narrating his ſtory in a pleaſing and entertaining manner, than by making his hero himſelf relate his own adventures.

And ſince I have happened to name romances, I muſt beg leave to ſay that this ſpecies of artificial Biography, when executed in a maſterly manner, does not want its advantages. Freed from a chain of real events, the author is at liberty to chooſe ſuch as appear to him moſt proper to convey whatever moral or inſtruction he pleaſes. The landſcape-painter, who accurately draws a ſcene which really exiſts in nature, deſerves to be praiſed for his ſkill and labour; but certainly he, whose eye, as one, who had

himſelf * a moſt creative fancy, expreſſes it with his uſual energy,

-----In a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown,-----
Turns them to ſhape,-----

And with a maſterly hand repreſents a ſcene adorned with ſtriking beauties, which his fancy enabled him properly to aſſemble, merits applauſe both on account of the execution and of the genius neceſſary for producing ſuch a piece. Thus too, a writer who gives us the hiſtory of a fictitious perſon, and fills up his life with great or inſtructive events, and by the probability of his narration makes us forget we are reading a romance, intereſts our paſſions, and ſtrongly moves every affection of the human mind, muſt have a genius and talents highly worthy of eſteem †.

* Shakeſpear.

† Ille per extenſum funem mihi poſſe videtur,
Ire, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
Irritat, mulcet, falcis terroribus implet.

I HOPE you do not ſuſpect me of recommending the common run of thoſe ſilly things which are offered to the public under the name of romances and novels. Vitious and fooliſh, they can only pleaſe the debauched, the lazy, the ignorant; and are below the contempt of a man of ſenſe and virtue. But there have been ſome of another ſtamp. Since Don Quixote was wrote in Spaniſh, and Gill Blas in French, ſeveral performances of this kind have appeared in foreign languages as well as in our own, from which we may learn a good deal of the manners of the world, and by laughing at the folly of others be taught how to avoid becoming ridiculous ourſelves.

THERE is one account of the life of an illuſtrious perſon, not indeed a modern one, which I cannot help mentioning to you here, both becauſe that divine elegance with which it is wrote, made it antiently be ſaid, that the muſes * ſpoke by the mouth of the author,

* Xenophontis voce muſas quaſi locutas ferunt. *Cic.*

and becauſe the generality of critics have been of opinion, that it is not a real but an ideal Hiſtory of the Life of Cyrus; and all agree that, however true the principal facts may be, the author hath added every circumſtance which could embelliſh it, or render it a perfect model of a religious, a wiſe and heroic prince. No book deſerves to be more warmly recommended to a young nobleman than the Cyropædia. The world has few ſuch books to boaſt of. No hiſtory can have a greater influence in forming the heart to truly noble and generous principles, or preſent the underſtanding with a more excellent pattern of virtuous and wiſe conduct. An admirable example, what a uſeful and charming work may be produced by a writer of true genius, who, not ſtrictly confined to the narration of real facts, gives his imagination ſcope to invent ſuch as appear fitteſt to convey uſeful inſtruction in the moſt agreeable manner.

There is one way of becoming acquainted with the characters of great men, that has always been reckoned among the beſt methods of acquiring a true idea of their real principles, and of thoſe motives which influenced their conduct and were the ſprings of their actions: reading their familiar letters. When one is writing to a friend, the heart is open, and diſcloſes thoſe opinions and ſentiments, which prudence makes it improper that all the world ſhould be acquainted with, or which perhaps leſs honourable motives make men cautiouſly conceal.

Of all the advantages and pleaſures, that flow from friendſhip, none is more agreeable, or gives a more pleaſing relief to a mind full of anxious cares, than to have one, into whoſe boſom we may pour all our ſecrets, and whoſe fidelity we are entirely aſſured of, "præparata pectora in quæ tuto ſecretum omne "deſcendat, quorum concientiam minus "quam tuam timeas", as Seneca finely expreſſes it: ſo great is this pleaſure, that when ab-

ſent from our friends we ſtill endeavour to enjoy it, and communicate to them by writing thoſe thoughts, thoſe ſentiments, thoſe ideas, which we cannot have the happineſs of doing by perſonal converſation. Letters that paſſed between friends muſt more than any thing have that turn, and breathe that ſpirit which thoſe who wrote them had in company, and by theſe tranſcripts of their hearts, we are, as it were, introduced into their acquaintance, and become familiar with them.

When we read Tully's Epiſtles, and thoſe of his friends, we cannot help thinking ourſelves intimate with thoſe perſonages; we enter into their ways of thinking, we conceive what their ſentiments would have been in certain circumſtances, and are enabled to form a juſter idea of their principles and the motives of their conduct, than we could poſſibly be by any other method. Mr. Melmoth has lately given a proof of this, and ſhewn what light may be thrown upon a character by accurately comparing and examining familiar letters,

letters, in his ingenious remarks on thoſe of Cicero: one would wiſh indeed that it had turned out as much to the honour of the orator, as it has done to the ingenuity of his elegant tranſlator, and that a man of Tully's abilities and real goodneſs of heart had not ſullied them by a conduct ſo unſteady.

I observed before, that, by ſtudying to become acquainted with the Hiſtory of great men, by reading their memoirs, their letters, or accounts of their lives wrote by able Biographers, we ſomehow become acquainted with themſelves, and may thus be ſaid to be introduced into the beſt company. Of what conſequence this is, muſt be readily acknowledged by every one. Not only the diſpoſitions and hearts of men take a tincture from thoſe with whom they are moſt intimate and ſtrictly connected, but even their heads and underſtandings form themſelves ſomewhat into a level with thoſe of the people they converſe with, and men in ſome meaſure become weak or able as the perſons are with whom they ſpend the greateſt part of their time.

How much does one improve in ſome people's company, how little can we learn in that of others? How many viſits may one make without meeting with any thing but dull ceremony or inſipid chit-chat about trifling ſubjects? Dreſs, equipage, game! from how many people does one return diſguſted and out of humour? How dangerous are ſome ſocieties, how conſtrained are we obliged to be in them, and how much on our guard? But in that illuſtrious ſociety of great men, into which Biography introduces us, we can never receive any hurt, and may often reap much benefit; even faults which were prejudicial to their cotemporaries may be of advantage to us, by teaching us how we may beſt eſcape errors into which others fell, and not be impoſed upon by ſimilar characters, that may happen to exiſt within the circle of our own acquaintance. None of Plutarch's heroes will lead us into any fooliſh party, none of their converſations will be dangerous, none of their friendſhips fatal; an intimacy with them will not be ruinous or expenſive; they will always be at home to receive

us,

us, and in ſuch a manner as will make us leave them with a warmer affection for them, and a higher eſteem of their virtues: the more inſtruction we receive from them, the greater reaſon will we have to be convinced that we may receive ſtill more. How happy muſt he be, who hath contracted ſuch friendſhip, and put himſelf under the direction of ſuch guardians, who will be able to adviſe him about the greateſt and ſmalleſt affairs, from whom he will hear truth without inſolence, be commended without flattery, and after whoſe example he may form himſelf?

Allow me, my Lord, to conclude this letter with tranſcribing a few lines from an* author, whom I have juſt now had in my eye, whoſe noble ſentiments, and lively manner of writing, never fail to warm the heart with a love of virtue, and of whoſe very faults, it hath with great propriety been ſaid, that they are agreeable †.----- "horum nemo non va-
"cabit, nemo non venientem ad ſe beatio-
"rem, amantioremque ſui demittit ---- nocte

* *Senec.* † Dulcibus abundat vitiis. *Quintil.*

con-

" conveniri et interdiu ab omnibus mortali-
" bus poſſunt ----- horum nemo annos tuos
" conteret, ſuos tibi contribuet: nullius ex
" his ſermo periculoſus erit, nullius amicitia
" capitalis, nullius ſumptuoſa obſervatio -----
" feres ex his quidquid voles, per illos non
" ſtabit quo minus quantum plurimum cœ-
" peris, haurias. Quæ illum felicitas quam
" pulchra ſenectus manet, qui ſe in horum
" clientelam contulit? habebit cum quibus
" de minimis maximiſque rebus deliberet,
" quos de ſe quotidie conſulat, a quibus au-
" diat verum ſine contumelia, laudetur ſine
" adulatione, ad quorum ſe ſimilitudinem ef-
" fingat."

I am, &c.

LETTER V.

Of TASTE;

And of ſome diſtinguiſhing Circumſtances of LONDON and PARIS.

MY LORD,

IT muſt appear evident to any one, who, without prejudice, examines the figure which this country has made in its moſt admired periods for learning and politeneſs, that a depth of judgment, ſolidity of underſtanding, and a power of expreſſing ſtrong paſſions with remarkable energy, have been far more its diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics, than delicacy or refinement of Taſte.

A BACON, a NEWTON, a Locke, have an indiſputable title to the palm in profound and rational

rational philoſophy. Milton and Shakeſpear have conceived the nobleſt ideas, ſeen through every winding of the human heart, drawn the characters of men, and deſcribed every object in nature with a force and expreſſion equal to the greateſt maſters of antiquity, and beyond any of their modern rivals. But with regard to exactneſs or refinement of Taſte, it will hardly be ſaid, that we do not oftener meet in Milton and Shakeſpear with what appears extravagant and improbable, than in Corneille, Racine or Voltaire. This laſt, taking notice of that want of decency and regularity, which may with too much juſtice be reproached to the Engliſh ſtage, confeſſes the great marks of genius which appear in our tragedies, and which, if thoſe irregularities were removed, would ſoon make the Engliſh excel the Grecian or French Drama *. One

* En Angleterre, la tragedie eſt veritablement une action ; et ſi les auteurs de ce pays joignoient á l'activité qui anime leurs pieces un ſtile naturel avec de la decence et de la regularité, ils l'emporteroient bien tot ſur les Grecs et ſur les François.

Volt. Eſſ. ſur le Poem. Epiq.

muſt

muſt indeed have imbibed ſtrong prejudices, who does not perceive and acknowledge that defect in point of chaſtity and correctneſs of taſte, which is conſpicuous in the beſt and ſtrongeſt geniuſes among the Engliſh writers.

WHENCE this ariſes, and how it happens, that the Engliſh are more remarkable for depth of underſtanding and ſublimity of genius, the French for a certain gentility of manner, and accuracy of Taſte, may be worth enquiring into; and as we go along, I may perhaps have ſome opportunities of pointing out to you, how a nobleman may have it in his power to improve the manner and correct the taſte of his country.

YOU are, I am perſuaded, far above the low prejudices of thoſe who cannot bear to be told that the French excel in any thing. I juſt now quoted one of their writers, allowing the Engliſh to be preferable in ſome things; may not we allow his countrymen to be ſo in others? Truth ought to be the foundation of all our opinions; and as it is ab-

abſurd, ſo nothing can diſcover a more vulgar and narrow diſpoſition of mind, than to refuſe to any country whatever merit truly belongs to it.

As the taſte of the metropolis muſt always have the greateſt influence upon that of a whole country, the character of a nation with reſpect to this article, will commonly be found to be what might be expected from the peculiarly favorable or unfavorable circumſtances of its capital. 'Tis generally indeed in the chief city of a country, that thoſe works are produced which determine its character for genius and taſte. In every metropolis there muſt be more incitements and opportunities to improve one's genius than in provincial towns; hence they become the centers whither all naturally tend, whoſe minds prompt them to acquire the friendſhip of eminent men, to endeavour to become eminent themſelves, to improve their talents, or to enlarge their knowledge and cultivate their underſtandings:

" Alios

" Alios liberalium ſtudiorum cupiditas, alios " ſpectacula, quoſdam traxit amicitia, quoſ- " dam induſtria latam oſtendendæ virtuti " nacta materiam *." By comparing, therefore, the circumſtances of the capitals, and the opportunities of improvement which they afford, we may form a probable conjecture concerning the cauſes of that difference of Taſte which prevails in any two nations.

LONDON and Paris, the capitals of two rival kingdoms, the two largeſt cities, and the principal ſeats of arts and ſciences in Europe, no leſs famous in modern, than Rome and Athens were in ancient times, are governed by cuſtoms, and diſtinguiſhed by circumſtances more different than thoſe which took place in the capitals of the Athenian and Roman Republicks.

LONDON is the greateſt trading city in the world: Paris has no trade but that of its elegant toys, and ingenious manufactures. Paris is the ſeat of a famous and great univer-

* Senec.

ſity,

ſity, and of ſocieties for the improvement of the Belles Lettres, and the Arts; there are no ſuch ſocieties eſtabliſhed in London, nor is it the ſeat of an univerſity. Paris is well provided with public libraries, and with collections of pictures, ſtatues, &c. open to the ſtudy and inſpection of every one: there are few public libraries, &c. in London: London is the metropolis of a free, Paris of an abſolute government. Theſe are ſome of the principal circumſtances which diſtinguiſh London and Paris. By reflecting a little upon each of them, we may perhaps be enabled to account for the difference of taſte in thoſe two cities.

COMMERCE, which is attended with ſo many advantages, and which diffuſes plenty, independence and happineſs among the bulk of a people, is, however, leſs favourable to certain accompliſhments, and leſs conducive to an elegancy of taſte and manners, than to perhaps more ſolid and general bleſſings. By turning the attention of men chiefly to gain, and by continually employing them in purſuit

of

of this object, it leaves them less time to study the arts, and to admire the productions of genius and taste.

Nor, considering it merely with respect to the influence it may have upon taste, can it be supposed a circumstance favourable to that of the British metropolis, that London is the greatest sea-port in the world. The intercourse which this must create between vast numbers of its inhabitants and sea-faring people, may even be thought to communicate a little of that roughness which is more the characteristic of the common run of sailors than politeness and refinement. Hence, perhaps, by attributing it to a complaisance to the prevailing humour of their audience, we may account for the low scenes and vulgar wit we meet with in some of our dramatic writers, and for that odd drollery which distinguishes the performances of a neighbouring maritime nation.

Every advantage is attended with some inconvenience: let the Parisians, who live in a

city which is no ſea-port, which has no trade but that of ſome elegant manufactures, and is alone ſupported by a paſſion for living perpetually in the capital, ſo univerſal among the French *nobleſſe*; boaſt of the politeneſs and refined taſte of their metropolis: the citizens of London may glory in what is more ſubſtantial, and contributes more to the happineſs of its inhabitants, a ſhare of wealth and independence, diffuſed by liberty and commerce among all ranks of men, which prevents the meaneſt individual from being enſlaved by the greateſt, and enables vaſt multitudes to enjoy thoſe bounties of heaven, which in other places are confined to a ſmall number of mankind. But certainly if we conſider commerce only ſo far as it may have an influence upon taſte, it can never be thought to be an advantage; nor can it be ſuppoſed a very favourable circumſtance to that of this country, that a conſiderable part of the trade of England is tranſacted in the metropolis. That of France is carried on in her provincial towns, and the inhabitants of Paris chiefly conſiſt of the *nobleſſe*, and of thoſe,

who, living on their fortunes and not being hurried by buſineſs, have leizure to improve their taſte, and to cultivate the fine arts.

UNIVERSITIES, I believe it will be denied by none, are the principal ſeats of *Learning* and *Knowledge* in every country. Even in thoſe ages, when univerſity-learning was of the moſt ridiculous ſort, foppiſh and bewildering as it muſt be confeſſed to have been, it was, however, the beſt the world then had, and the members of univerſities were more enlightened and leſs ignorant than their countrymen. Though there is a certain ſtiffneſs and pedantry that ſometimes attends men of great erudition, and which gives their manners an aukward look to the people of active life; yet ſtill we may, without being thought partial, affirm, that they muſt in all probability have a more correct taſte; and, by being accuſtomed to ſtudy the nobleſt models, be more readily ſtruck with the irregularities of works that deviate from the rules obſerved by the beſt writers, than other perſons

can be ſuppoſed to be, whoſe way of life has not led them to improve their taſte, or to correct it by thoſe rules, which were obſerved by the beſt geniuſes of all ages, but eſpecially by the antients. We may even ſuppoſe that converſation with men of learning muſt be of advantage to others; that in places where there are great numbers of men of letters, a certain proportion of learning muſt by them be communicated to the people; and that there muſt be a greater chance of meeting with perſons who have taken ſome pains to correct and improve their taſtes.

'Tis a nice queſtion, whether or not it tends more to the advancement of real ſcience, that univerſities and ſeminaries for the education of youth ſhould be placed in great and populous cities, than in remote and diſtant villages: the practice of the antients ſeems to countenance the cuſtom of having them ſituated in the metropolis, and of educating the youth of faſhion in ſuch places, and in ſight of ſuch ſcenes as they muſt be converſant

ſant with and deeply intereſted in, when they come to perform their different parts in life. Epaminondas, the laſt year of his life, ſaid, heard, ſaw, did the ſame things as at that time of life when he began to be inſtructed. "Epaminondas la derniere anné de ſa vie, "diſoit, ecutoit, voyoit, faiſoit les memes "choſes que dans l'age ou il avoit com-"mencé d'etre inſtruit." This obſervation made by a very good judge *, when ſpeaking of the difference of antient and modern education, and illuſtrated by naming one of the greateſt characters that ever appeared in the world, as an example of it, muſt give a great ſanction to the antient manner of education.

But whether upon the whole it may be of advantage, or not, that young gentlemen ſhould be educated in great cities, or in places retired and conſecrated to the muſes alone, is not neceſſary to be determined to prove what I cannot help being perſuaded of, that the univerſity of Paris has had a mighty in-

* Monteſquieu.

fluence in correcting and improving the taſte of the French metropolis, and in diffuſing a ſort of critical accuracy among its inhabitants; while at the ſame time the members of the univerſity, by living in ſo great a city, and converſing with people of active life, have many opportunities of improving in politeneſs and a knowledge of the fine arts, which can be met with no where but in the capital of a kingdom.

The univerſity of Paris is a great body, and endued with very ample privileges: it conſiſts of about ten colleges, which enjoy the full rights of the univerſity, and I believe, about thirty others, whoſe rights and privileges are not ſo great. It can hardly be ſuppoſed that ſuch foundations, conſecrated to the arts and ſciences, will have no influence in communicating a taſte for the muſes to a city, whoſe inhabitants muſt have ſo much intercourſe with learned men. Let us ſuppoſe the colleges which are now placed at Oxford or Cambridge to have been erected in different parts of London, can it be

be imagined that this would not have had a great influence in communicating knowledge and taſte to the whole city, or that the converſation of ſo many men of learning and genius would not have had a good effect?

But beſides the univerſity, there are ſeveral ſocieties eſtabliſhed in Paris expreſly for the improvement of taſte. The French academy for the improvement of eloquence and poetry: The royal academy of Inſcriptions and Belles Lettres, eſtabliſhed in 1663, for cultivating the Belles Lettres, explaining antient monuments, and tranſmitting to poſterity the remarkable events of the Monarchy by medals, &c. The royal academy of Painting * and Sculpture, under the government of a director, who is appointed by the

* It is with the greateſt pleaſure we obſerve the good effects of the Society for the encouragement of arts, manufactures and commerce. A ſociety which, without neglecting what tends more immediately to the improvement of agriculture, and the neceſſary arts of life, gives the moſt honourable encouragement to thoſe that are

the king, a chancellor, four rectors, one of whom attends every quarter, and twelve profeſſors, who attend each of them a month by turns, direct the ſtudies of the pupils, propoſe models to them, and correct their deſigns.

THERE is alſo a royal academy for the improvement of architecture, in which inſtructions

elegant and ornamental. Had ſuch a ſociety been inſtituted thirty years ago, London would, by this time, have been the grand ſeat of arts, as it is the envied ſeat of freedom. From the exhibitions that have already been made, we may conceive what twenty years gradual improvement will produce. Some of the drawings—prints—landſcapes— and even Hiſtory-pieces, expoſed to public view, diſcovered both genius and execution. The premiums muſt excite emulation, which is all that Engliſhmen want to enable them to ſhine in any art. The experience of a few years will demonſtrate, that genius is not wanting, that liberty is favourable to Taſte, and that it was owing to ſome accidental circumſtances that the Engliſh have not excelled as much in the fine arts, as in profound ſcience. What may we not expect under the auſpicious reign of a PRINCE, who has him-

ſtructions are given gratis, and prizes annually diſtributed to incite the emulation of the ſtudents.

AMONG the different circumſtances which diſtinguiſh London and Paris, none is more remarkable than this, that the latter is well ſupplied with great public libraries, with large collections of pictures, ſtatues, prints, and every curioſity of nature or art*, open to the inſpection

himſelf a diſtinguiſhed taſte for the fine arts, and has aſcended the throne at a time when the genius of his ſubjects is turned that way, and only ſtands in need of royal and generous protection to convince the world, that in a free country every art may be brought to perfection. 'Tis with the greateſt pleaſure we perceive that it depends upon ourſelves to make every thing here as favourable to the fine arts as in Paris, and then the effects of liberty will appear conſpicuous. When this letter was wrote, though the Society for Arts was ſet on foot, it was not much known, and no proofs of its happy influence had been given, which is now with the utmoſt joy ſeen and acknowledged.

* Every circumſtance now becomes favourable, and every thing that was wanting to make London as poliſhed and elegant as it is rich and great, will gradually be

inſpection of every one; and which, by being ſo common and of ſuch *eaſy acceſs*, cannot fail of ſometimes giving young people an opportunity of diſcovering that they have a genius, which in other countries, where the generality of the world ſeldom have an opportunity of viewing the noble productions of art, thoſe who are endued with equal capacities never have it in their power to diſcover or perhaps even to *feel*. You may eaſily conceive that there are many in this great city of London, who, if they had an opportunity of viewing collections of the works of the great maſters, would *feel* that nature had given them talents to reliſh the fine arts, and perhaps to become celebrated artiſts themſelves, who at preſent, having no

be ſupplied. The Britiſh Muſeum exceeds any thing of the kind in Paris, and is worthy ſo large and opulent a city as London. Magnificent at preſent, it muſt be ſtill encreaſing by the donations of the curious and learned. Its plan is extenſive, its regulations good. The ſtudious may read, and philoſophers examine the productions of nature: there is ſomething to ſuit every one, and all have as eaſy acceſs to this public collection, as is conſiſtent with order and propriety.

ſuch

ſuch opportunity, paſs obſcurely through life, without bringing to light thoſe talents with which they were endued, and which, if properly cultivated, might have been an ornament to the world.

ANY one who has been at Paris may remember what fine collections of pictures are open to the public inſpection, and what numbers of young people he muſt often have met with at the Luxembourg palace, viewing its famous gallery, as well as the noble collections of the works of great maſters, which are to be ſeen in its other apartments. The Duke of Orleans's collection at the *Palais-Royal*, one of the beſt on this ſide the Alps, is not ſullenly ſhut up from public view, or open only to thoſe who give high bribes to his ſervants; but at particular hours any one, who has a taſte for enjoying the beauties of the painter's art, may have an opportunity of viewing capital pieces of the moſt famous hands of the different ſchools, and of ſuch as are of the moſt oppoſite ſtyles. And for thoſe who have a curioſity to form an idea of pictures,

pictures, ſtatues, edifices, gardens, and of whatever elſe the ingenious art of engraving can give us a notion, there is a public collection of prints and drawings, ſo ample as can hardly fail to gratify the wiſhes of the moſt curious and inquiſitive. Beſides theſe public collections, the private houſes of a great many noblemen contain ſomething worth ſeeing, and any one can have eaſy acceſs to moſt of them.

Of what advantage this muſt be, you will readily conceive, and how much it muſt tend not only to give true geniuſes an opportunity of diſcovering their talents, but to improve the taſte of thoſe who have no extraordinary capacity: by being accuſtomed frequently to look at what is excellent, one becomes in ſome degree a judge, and is apt to be diſguſted at the ſight of what is unnatural and bad; as by often hearing good muſic, even thoſe, who have no remarkable taſte that way, acquire a delicacy of ear, which is ſhocked with what is diſcordant and unharmonious.

BESIDES, one can ſeldom fail to meet at thoſe places with ſome people; who, being themſelves ſenſibly ſtruck with beauties or faults, are prompted by their ſtrong natural feelings to make pertinent obſervations, and thus help to form the judgments of others to a right taſte, and are themſelves improved by the converſation and remarks of thoſe around them.

NOTHING ſurprizes foreigners who come to London more than the ſcarcity of ſuch public collections in ſo great a city, and the difficulty and expence of procuring a ſight of what is in the private houſes of the great! What vaſt ſums are expended in buying pictures and ſtatues, and how are they afterwards buried and made uſeleſs for the improvement of taſte! Perhaps were theſe more expoſed to public view, it might help in ſome meaſure to correct the taſte, and prevent the great and opulent of this nation from being ſo often impoſed upon, in theſe articles.

A NOBLEMAN of the higheſt rank hath indeed lately ſet a generous example, by opening a room containing a collection of models of the antique ſtatues, and by permitting any one to enjoy the pleaſure of viewing models of theſe precious remains of antient art, and artiſts to copy from them: it were to be wiſhed that this example was followed; the lovers of the fine arts would then have reaſon not only to admire what the Duke of Richmond himſelf has done, but to be grateful to him for leading the way, and giving a truly noble example to others of treating the arts and artiſts in a generous manner.

SUCH indulgence would ſoon make Britain not only the ſeat of profound philoſophy and ſolid knowledge, but of taſte and refinement in the elegant arts. In vain, will the climate be objected to this wiſhed-for pre-eminence; London and Antwerp are ſituated in the ſame degree of north latitude. But where were Rubens and Vandyke born? and though, perhaps, it ſhould be allowed that the climate is not

not ſo favourable as that of ſome other places, the capital of Great Britain has one advantage which may well be ſuppoſed to compenſate ſmaller ones, which attend other cities, particularly the metropolis of the French Monarchy: London is the capital of a free, Paris of an abſolute government. But the conſideration of the influence this naturally has upon taſte, would open too large a field to enter upon at the concluſion of a letter. I muſt therefore delay it, till I do myſelf the honour of writing to you again.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

On the INFLUENCE of LIBERTY upon TASTE, and of the Age of AUGUSTUS.

MY LORD,

IN a letter which I lately did myſelf the honour to write to your Lordſhip, I took notice of ſome circumſtances which diſtinguiſh Paris from London, and which, conſidered only ſo far as they have an influence upon the *Belles Lettres* and Taſte, ſeem favourable to the metropolis of France. I ſhall in this, as I promiſed, endeavour to ſhew what influence the different degrees of freedom enjoyed by the two countries, of which London and Paris are the capitals, may naturally be imagined to have upon theſe articles.

I DONT

I don't know how it hath become a pretty common opinion that the ſtrongeſt efforts of genius will probably be made by thoſe, who enjoy Liberty, and are inſpired by its animating influence; but that juſtneſs and refinement of Taſte will generally be found to be more improved among the ſubjects of an abſolute, than among thoſe of a free government.

THAT the firſt of theſe propoſitions is true, I ſhall readily own; the Hiſtory of all ages, the noble monuments of all free countries, confirm the truth, that Liberty appears attended with whatever is great, ſpirited, or ingenious: that the ſecond is falſe, I am perſuaded, may be proved from Hiſtory too, as well as from the nature of the thing; and the ſame monuments bear witneſs that freedom has alſo in her train, genuine elegance, ſevere juſtneſs of taſte, natural, ſimple, and unaffected truth.

MR. Pope himſelf, who was as remarkable for his judgment as poetical genius, ſeems in-

advertently to have given countenance to the opinion, that an abſolute government is more favourable to the improvement of Taſte, than a free one, in thoſe lines of his Eſſay on Criticiſm, where he touches upon the progreſſion of the fine arts when they were baniſhed from Italy.

But ſoon by impious arms from Latium chas'd
Their antient bounds, the baniſh'd muſes paſs'd;
Thence arts o'er all the northern world advance,
But critic learning flouriſh'd moſt in France:
The rules a nation, born to ſerve, obeys,
And Boileau ſtill in right of Horace ſways.

Mr. Pope's authority juſtly claims the higheſt reſpect; but whatever regard is due to ſo great a name, let it never carry us ſo far as to believe that thoſe who are *born to ſerve*, naturally *obey rules* in the fine arts and Belles Lettres (for of theſe he is talking) better than thoſe who are born free.

This

THIS opinion that refinement and elegance will probably be more ſtudied and improved among the ſubjects of an abſolute, than among thoſe of a free government, ſeems to have taken riſe from a partial obſervation of the ſtate of Taſte in the French Monarchy in modern times, and of what happened in Rome, when Octavius made himſelf maſter of her liberties and of the world.

BUT, notwithſtanding that polite figure which the ages of Auguſtus and Lewis XIV. will for ever make in the annals of the world, I am perſuaded it may be laid down as a certain maxim, that in every country, not only genius, but Taſte alſo, will be found to be in proportion to freedom, unleſs the influence of this general law be counteracted by inferior circumſtances and accidents, as any general law, either in the phyſical or moral world, may be obſerved to be in many particular inſtances.

To deny the truth of this aſſertion, one muſt forget in what countries the beſt mo-

dels of natural and elegant compoſitions of all kinds were produced; at what time genuine Taſte began to be cultivated in thoſe countries, when it was carried to its utmoſt perfection, and when it began to decline and give way to what was unnatural and falſe.

When did the inhabitants of any, even the moſt civilized abſolute monarchy that ever exiſted under heaven, diſcover ſo refined, ſo elegant, ſo correct a Taſte, as the citizens of the free ſtates of Greece did? Did ever any one who was born the ſubject of an abſolute prince more ſtrictly *obey* and ſeverely follow thoſe *rules* which good ſenſe and nature pointed out to be juſt, than they did, who in thoſe ſtates were *born free?* It cannot be ſaid with any juſtice that they did: nor did ever any one appear, who was born after the Roman emperors had eſtabliſhed their power upon the ruins of Liberty, that could diſpute for the prize of elegant and juſt compoſition with thoſe who were born and educated in better days.

As

As the age of Auguſtus is prior in time to that of Lewis XIV. I ſhall firſt endeavour to obviate the argument againſt the friendly influence, that Liberty undoubtedly has upon Taſte, which may be brought from the elegance and exquiſite beauty of the works of the Auguſtan age; and to ſhew that we are indebted, for the noble compoſitions of that age, not to the influence of Auguſtus's Supreme Power, but to the influence of that Liberty, which, unfortunately for the world and true Taſte, he overthrew, and which had already made Rome the ſeat of genius and refinement, before fortune had raiſed Octavius to imperial ſway, or he had aſſumed to himſelf thoſe powers, which formerly were divided among the different ranks of the Roman people.

LIBERTY indeed cannot alone, or all at once, refine the genius or Taſte of mankind: other circumſtances muſt concur, but Liberty is ſtill the animating cauſe, and a *total* deprivation of it would ſoon be found to extinguiſh every ſpark both of genius and Taſte.

A people *may* be free, and yet rough and unpoliſhed in their Taſte as well as manners; but a nation of *ſlaves muſt* either diſcover no Taſte at all, or a vitiated and falſe one. The Romans long retained a certain roughneſs of manner, and deſpiſed elegance and refinement. Their firſt attempts in compoſition, like thoſe of every other nation, that begins to extend its dominion and conſequence in the world, and to form its government and laws, were rude and barbarous, and their firſt productions in the fine arts rough and unpoliſhed. But when their conſtitution was fully eſtabliſhed, when their Taſte in eloquence began to be refined, when Carthage and the world bowed before the Roman Eagle, when the governors of conquered provinces brought immenſe wealth to Rome, and raiſed families whoſe great opulence enabled them to cultivate and encourage every thing that was elegant and fine, and when the muſes had forſaken Greece, no longer now the ſeat of Liberty; then did the Romans, under the direction of the learned who came from that country, begin to ſtudy the elegancies of Taſte,

Taſte, to love the arts, and to poliſh the roughneſs of their ſtyle and manner.

IT will in vain be objected againſt the happy influence of Liberty, that the Romans, or any other free people, were for a long time rough and unpoliſhed. A multiplicity of cauſes may retard improvements in elegance and the fine arts. The Lacedemonians were free as well as the Athenians; but as among the firſt every refinement was diſcouraged, and among the latter every thing ingenious and polite was held in the higheſt eſteem, their characters for learning and politeneſs are extremely different. The ruſticity of the antient Romans proves nothing. But if we conſider how ſhort a period intervened from their beginning to ſtudy the arts, till they loſt their freedom; and reflect that the deſpotiſm of their emperors put a ſudden and unnatural ſtop to further improvement, it will afford a convincing proof, that liberty is favourable and arbitrary power unfavourable to the liberal arts. That this was the caſe will appear evident from the beſt authorities.

THERE is a remarkable paſſage in Tully (De claris oratoribus) in which ſpeaking of M. Cato, after having highly commended his great and various talents as an orator, he owns that his ſtyle was antiquated, and that he made uſe of ſome barbarous words, for ſo, ſays he, they then ſpake *; and confeſſing that he was not ſufficiently poliſhed, he adds, as a reaſon or excuſe for it, that with reſpect to the age in which they lived, Cato was ſo old that there remained no writing of any one who was more antient, that was worth reading †. Yet M. Cato, as we are expreſsly told in the ſame Dialogue, died only eighty three years before Cicero was conſul ‡.

* Antiquior eſt ejus ſermo, et quædam horridiora verba, ita enim tum loquebantur.

† Nec vero ignoro, nondum eſſe ſatis politum hunc oratorem . . . . quippe cum ita ſit, ad noſtrorum temporum rationem vetus ut nullius ſcriptum extet dignum quidem lectione, quod ſit antiquius.

‡ Qui mortuus eſt annis LXXXIII. ipſis ante me conſulem.

THUS

THUS it appears evident from the opinion of the beſt judges, the moſt eloquent of the Romans themſelves, that the Roman ſtyle and manner remained long rough and unpoliſhed. Active and warlike, living perpetually amidſt the din of arms, or intereſted and buſied in forming their government and fixing their laws, they had no time to apply to what was elegant and refined; "nec enim "in conſtituentibus rempublicam, nec in "bella gerentibus naſci cupiditas dicendi ſo-"let*. 'Twas after their republic had acquired its juſt form, and the enemies, which ſurrounded them on every hand, were ſubdued, and no longer in a condition to keep them in a perpetual alarm, and after the haughtieſt of their rivals were humbled, that the Romans, now bleſt with ſome ſhare of quiet and ſecurity, began to ſtudy what was refined, and not only to be careful to ſay what was true and juſt, but to ſpeak and write in an elegant manner.

* Cic. de Clar. Orat.

BEFORE this time, indeed, while they were buſied in forming their conſtitution, and reducing each ſtate in Italy, one after another, to a dependency upon that of Rome, we muſt ſuppoſe that a certain ſort of oratory, ſuch as their language, yet unpoliſhed, could afford, and capable of affecting a rough and brave people, flouriſhed among them. We know that this was actually the caſe, and that many of the citizens acquired great authority by ſpeaking; but it was not by an eloquence that would have charmed them in their politer days, but by a plain ſort of rhetoric, like that of L. Caſſius, who had great influence, not by his eloquence, but yet by what he ſaid, "Multum potuit, non eloquentia, ſed dicendo tamen," as Tully obſerves *, for the people knew he was a man of ſevere virtue, and on this account he had great credit with them †. 'Twas the character of the man, and what he ſaid, not the manner

* Cic. de Clar. Orat. † Severitate popularis. Ibid.

in

in which he ſaid it, that had an influence upon the martial and honeſt ſpirits of the Romans in thoſe days of incorrupted integrity.

BUT though we find that it was late before the Romans began to ſtudy the elegancies of ſtyle and compoſition, when they actually applied the force of their genius to acquire theſe accompliſhments, the high Roman ſpirit, nurſed by freedom, and made manly and bold by that independence, and ſhare of conſequence in the ſtate, which every citizen of Rome poſſeſſed, enabled them to make as rapid a progreſs in oratory and the fine arts, as they had formerly done in conquering the world. In the ſame dialogue, in which the great maſter of Roman eloquence informs us, that no writings of any one before the age of the elder Cato were worth reading, he gives it as his opinion that the Latin tongue had arrived to full maturity, and Roman eloquence attained its almoſt utmoſt perfection, in the perſon of L. Craſſus, who, in an oration much admired by all good judges,

judges, which he made in the 34th year of his age, the very year that Tully was born, gave eminent proofs of his conſummate abilities, as an accompliſhed orator *.

THUS we ſee that for about a century before the birth of Cicero, while Rome was yet free, eloquence was continually making rapid progreſs to perfection, 'till at laſt conſummated in the perſon of this great man, the ſame tyrannic ſtroke, that ſevered Tully's head from his body, gave a fatal and finiſhing blow to the Roman liberty and eloquence; and, as Seneca ſays of Cato and freedom, eloquence and liberty, which it was impoſſible to ſeparate from each other, periſhed and were extinguiſhed together, "ſimulque extincta ſunt, quæ nefas erat di-"vidi;" for from that moment, oratory had

* Hæc Craſſi cum edita oratio eſt, quam te ſæpe legiſſe certo ſcio, quatuor & triginta tum habebat annos, totidemque annis mihi ætate præſtabat. His enim coſſ. eam legem ſuaſit, quibus nati ſumus: quod idcirco poſui, ut, dicendi latinè prima maturitas in qua ætate extitiſſet, poſſet notari, et ut intelligeretur jam ad ſummum pœne eſſe perductam.

fallen

fallen from its perfection, and gradually became more and more falſe, unnatural, and widely different from the chaſte model of the true and genuine eloquence of the days of freedom.

THAT the Roman eloquence muſt have had a mighty influence in improving a good Taſte in every thing elſe can hardly be queſtioned. The ſtudy of this art has by the beſt judges been allowed to be naturally connected with whatever is graceful and elegant, or can tend to improve or embelliſh the powers of the human mind. In every country where eloquence is a neceſſary accompliſhment for thoſe who expect to make a figure in the ſtate, or to be eminent among their fellow citizens, it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that as the taſte in oratory improves, the general Taſte of the nation muſt at the ſame time be corrected, and its genius prepared for producing noble and juſt works of every kind, whenever the attention of the people ſhall be turned to the ſtudy of the fine arts.

BUT,

But, beſides the natural tendency of that perfection in oratory to which the Romans had attained in the days of freedom, there were ſeveral other circumſtances that contributed to refine the Taſte of Rome, and to form thoſe immortal writers who flouriſhed in the laſt age of the republic.

The conqueſt of Greece diſcovered to the Romans, ſcenes very different from any they had yet ſeen in the various countries they had formerly ſubdued. By creating an intercourſe, and making them acquainted with the moſt ingenious and elegant people that ever exiſted upon earth, it muſt have had a mighty influence to form their genius, and to give them a taſte for what was polite and refined. That this was actually the caſe you will find to have been the opinion of the beſt judges among the Romans themſelves, and you will meet with various proofs of it in almoſt all their claſſic writers. "Multas (artes) ad animorum cor-" porumque cultum nobis eruditiſſima omni-" um gens invexit," to uſe the words of the

great Roman Hiſtorian *. 'Twas the Greeks who taught the Romans almoſt every genteel and graceful exerciſe, and every liberal and elegant accompliſhment.

Before the time of the firſt Macedonian war, the Romans had little intercourſe with the Greeks. Their ambaſſadors had indeed, about twenty years before that period, appeared for the firſt time in the principal cities of Greece, and they had entered into a league againſt Philip, as auxiliaries to the Ætolians † in a war which was carried on againſt that king during more than ten years immediately preceding the firſt Macedonian war.

BUT from the time that this latter war was concluded, that is, from about ninety years before the birth of Cicero, and about four after the end of the ſecond punic war, the Romans had more and more intercourſe with the Greeks, travelled into their country, and ſtudied Arts and Sciences under Grecian maſters. The conſequences of this war gave

* Liv. Lib. 39. † Liv. Lib. 26. cap. 24.

occaſion

occaſion to ſeveral embaſſies to Rome from Macedon, and from ſeveral of the ſtates and cities of Greece; and the behaviour of the Roman general, after he had conquered Philip, ſeems to have been the moſt proper imaginable to conciliate the minds of the Greeks to make them conceive a favourable opinion of the Romans, and wiſh to cultivate a friendly correſpondence with them. He inſiſted with the ſenate, and at laſt obtained his requeſt, that freedom ſhould be reſtored to all the cities of Greece, and at the Iſthmian games, when vaſt multitudes were gathered together from all parts, and with the moſt anxious expectation waited to hear what was to become of Greece, and what their fortune was to be, the Roman general, in his own name, and in that of the Senate, ordered freedom, and a liberty of living according to their own laws and inſtitutions to be proclaimed to all the ſtates of Greece that had been ſubjected to the dominion of the kings of Macedon: "liberos, immunes, "ſuis legibus eſſe jubet Corinthios," &c. But your Lordſhip will read the whole paſſage with

with a great deal of pleaſure, as it is moſt charmingly related by Livy in his thirty third Book: You will there ſee, with what rapture the Greeks heard the dear names of liberty and freedom proclaimed, with what grateful embraces they had almoſt ſtifled the Roman Conſul, what eulogiums they beſtowed upon the Romans; and from thence be eaſily led to conceive what a favourable opportunity this muſt have been for beginning a mutual intercourſe and correſpondence.

THE inhabitants of Italy, who went to Greece upon this expedition, muſt have acquired ſome knowledge of the Greek language as well as of the Grecian manners and cuſtoms; and a great number of Roman captives, who had been taken during the war with Hannibal and ſold as ſlaves, and who had now lived ſeveral years in different parts of Greece *, being reſtored to liberty, and returning to Rome with Flaminius, we may imagine would diffuſe among their country-

* Liv. lib. 34. cap. 50.

men a knowledge of the Greek language, and a taſte for the refinements of Greece hitherto unknown in Italy; beſides, a great many captives and hoſtages of high rank adorned his triumph *, and during their reſidence at Rome could not fail to have much influence in inſpiring the Romans with a reliſh for the politeneſs of their country.

Not long after this, when the unhappy Perſeus was defeated by Paulus Æmilius, the inhabitants of Rome had ſtill greater opportunities of improving by converſation with Greeks; for when Æmilius returned in triumph, a great many ingenious men came with him to Rome. Theſe, in all probability, were the beſt men of Greece, who being repreſented by vile informers and betrayers of their country as enemies to the Roman intereſt, were called upon to appear at Rome, and anſwer for their conduct †. Pauſanias,

* Ante currum multi nobiles captivi obſideſque, inter quos Demetrius regis Philippi filius fuit, & Armenes, Nabidis tyranni filius, Lacedæmonius. Liv. lib. 37.

† Liv. lib. 45. cap. 31.

in

in his account of Achaia, makes their number to have been more than a thouſand; and among theſe were the famous Hiſtorian Polybius and his father Lycortas, prætor of the Achæans, a ſon and father worthy of each other, and of the friendſhip of Philopæmen. Such men, we may naturally ſuppoſe, muſt have had a great influence to inſpire the Romans with a love of Greek letters, and to improve their taſte; and we know that this was the caſe; for to the inſtructions of a Polybius did the Romans owe one of the greateſt and moſt accompliſhed men their country ever produced *.

THE Romans themſelves too muſt have returned to Rome, after the defeat of Perſeus, with a high admiration of Greece, and great-

* Omnibus belli et togæ dotibus, ingeniique et ſtudiorum eminentiſſimus ſui ſæculi.

Scipio tam elegans liberalium ſtudiorum omniſque doctrinæ et auctor et admirator fuit, ut Polybium, Panætiumque, præcellentes ingenio viros domi militiæque ſecum bahuerit. Vell. Paterc. Lib. 1.

ly improved in their taſte by a view of the elegant productions of that country. Æmilius, accompanied with his ſon Scipio, then a youth in his ſeventeenth year, had found leiſure after his victorious campaign to make a tour through Greece *, and to take a view of the beautiful monuments of antient art with which it abounded. In this tour, as Plutarch informs us, "He eaſed the people's "grievances, reformed their government, "and beſtowed gifts upon them;" which could not fail to make him and his attendants as agreeable to the Greeks, as a view of the exquiſite beauties of their country ſeems to have been to him. Both Plutarch and Livy take notice of the rapture with which Æmilius himſelf beheld the fine works of the Grecian artiſts: the former tells us, that when in Olympia he viewed the ſtatue of Jove, he uttered theſe celebrated words, "This "Jupiter of Phidias is the very Jupiter of "Homer," and Livy, in his manner, thus ſtrongly expreſſes it ----- "Jovem velut præ-"ſentem intuens, motus animo eſt," both

* Liv. lib. 45. cap. 27.

which

which accounts may convince us with what extreme ſenſibility Æmilius perceived the beauties of the imitative arts, and with what an improved taſte and reliſh for them, he and his attendants muſt have returned to Rome. For though the behaviour of Æmilius himſelf only is mentioned, we may eaſily imagine that many of his train were ſtruck with the ſame beauties, and carried with them to Rome, and propagated among their fellow-citizens, a high opinion of the noble and elegant genius of the Greeks. Æmilius indeed, as Livy ſays, made this tour with no great croud of attendants *, but we may naturally ſuppoſe that they were the moſt ingenious and learned of his army, and the moſt capable of making uſeful obſervations for the improvement of their own country.

ABOUT ten years after the triumph of Æmilius, the Athenians ſent Carneades and ſome other philoſophers ambaſſadors to Rome. Upon their arrival the moſt ſtudious and

* Profectus cum haud magno comitatu. Lib. 45.

ingenious of the Roman youth waited upon them, heard them with inexpreſſible pleaſure, and were charmed with the eloquence of Carneades in particular *. We may from this infer, that the Greek language was pretty commonly underſtood among the moſt ingenious of the Romans even at that time, elſe how could they be ſo charmed with the Orations of Carneades who ſpoke in Greek? But from this period the genius of the Romans ſeems to have been ſo much turned to the ſtudy of the Greek language, philoſophy, and eloquence, that they were conſidered as eſſential parts of a liberal education among them, and almoſt every man of faſhion at Rome could ſpeak and write in Greek. This taſte ſeems to have made ſuch rapid progreſs, that even the rigid Cato, who had alarmed the Roman Senate about the dangerous influence of Carneades, and the bad effects which might ariſe from the ſtudy of the Greek language and philoſophy †, could not himſelf reſiſt the charm, but in his old age applied to the

* Plut. in Cat.
† Plut. in Vit. Cat.

ſtudy

ſtudy that tongue *. From this time it became more and more uncommon to meet with any one in Rome, but of the loweſt rank, who was not pretty well acquainted with Greek.

DURING the Mithridatic war, a great number of the principal and moſt polite of the Athenians came to Rome, driven from home by the miſeries of their own country. Converſation with ſuch people muſt have afforded the Romans the beſt opportunities of improvement. This we find was actually the caſe: Tully wholly applied himſelf to cultivate his taſte and manner under ſuch maſters †; and as Cicero himſelf certainly owed

* Cic. Acad. Quæſt. Lib. 2.

† Eodem tempore cùm princeps academiæ Philo cum Athenienſium optimatibus, Mithridatico bello, domo profugiſſet Romamque veniſſet totum me ei tradidi.

Commentabar declamitans (ſic enim nunc loquuntur) ſæpe cum M. Piſone, et cum Q. Pompeio, aut cum aliquo quotidie; idque faciebam multum etiam Latinè, ſed Græcè ſæpius; vel quod Græca oratio plura ornamenta

owed a great deal to the inſtructions he got from them, ſo we may reaſonably conclude that the fine writers of the Ciceronian age were greatly improved by converſation with Greeks, reading Greek authors, and viewing the exquiſite productions of Grecian art.

As in the laſt century of their republic, the Romans became acquainted with the ingenious men of Greece, ſo at different times of the ſame period the works of the fine writers who had flouriſhed in that country in its free and beſt days, and the elegant and inimitable productions of Grecian art were brought to Rome, and became models for the Romans to ſtudy and improve by.

BEFORE the famous ſiege of Syracuſe, which happened during the time of the ſecond punic war, " Rome had never ſeen or known

namenta ſuppeditans, conſuetudinem ſimiliter Latinè dicendi afferebat, vel quod a Græcis ſummis doctoribus, niſi Græcè dicerem, neque corrigi poſſem neque doceri. Cic. de Clar. Orat.

" any

" any ſuperfluous curioſities, nor were any " rarities or exquiſite pieces of art that ſhew- " ed an elegant and polite taſte to be found " there;" but after this city was taken, Marcellus, by carrying to Rome the fine ſtatues and paintings with which Syracuſe abounded, " firſt taught the Romans to ad- " mire and value the Grecian arts, and gave " them a taſte and reliſh for thoſe exquiſite " performances which never had been under- " ſtood before *.

WHEN Flaminius triumphed over Philip, he brought to Rome ſeveral elegant pieces of ſculpture in marble and braſs, and a great many vaſes carved with exquiſite art. Moſt of theſe he had taken from the king, and ſome of them from the ſtates and cities through which he paſſed, but all of them, 'tis probable, were the workmanſhip of Greek artiſts †.

* Plut. in Vit. Marcel.

† Signa ærea et marmorea tranſtulit, plura Philippo adempta, quam quæ ex civitatibus cœperat.

——— Vaſa multa omnis generis, cælata pleraque, quædam eximiæ artis. Liv. Lib. 34.

WHAT

WHAT an immenſe collection of pictures and ſtatues adorned the famous triumph of P. Æmilius, is well known: they were drawn upon ſeven hundred and fifty carriages, and a whole day was hardly ſufficient to give the Romans time to behold this ſplendid ſhow. At the ſame time, a vaſt number of veſſels, valuable as well for their largeneſs as the beauty and ſtrong *relievo* of their engraved work, were brought to Rome *; and the firſt library in that city conſiſted of books, which Æmilius permitted his ſon to take from Perſeus †. Many of the inhabitants of Rome muſt have had an opportunity of improving by reading theſe books. The firſt intimacy between Scipio and Polybius, as this Hiſtorian himſelf informs us, took its riſe from a mutual intercourſe, occaſioned by his borrowing ſome of them from Scipio, who politely lent them to him, and took great pleaſure in converſing with ſo ſenſible a man concerning the ſubjects of which they treated.

* Plut. in Vit. Æmil.

† Id. et ibid.

ABOUT twenty years after this, when the Conſul Mummius took Corinth, with what an additional number of noble pieces of Grecian art Rome was adorned from the ſpoils of that elegant city, every one knows; and the famous ruſticity and want of taſte of Mummius, who, when he was about to tranſport the pictures and ſtatues of the greateſt maſters to Italy, told thoſe who were to carry them, that if any of them were loſt, they ſhould find new ones in their place, will for ever be remembered, and perhaps afford a ſuſpicion, that at that time there were ſtill ſome remains of ruſticity among the Romans, elſe how can we ſuppoſe that any man of ſo high a rank could be ſo extremely ignorant and unpoliſhed?*

WHAT I have hitherto mentioned, happened before the birth of Cicero. I ſhall only

* Mummius tam rudis fuit, ut, capta Corintho, cum maximorum artificum perfectas manibus tabulas, ac ſtatuas in Italiam portandas locaret, juberet prædici conducentibus, ſi eas perdidiſſent, *novas eos reddituros.*
Vell. Paterc.

take

take notice of one addition to the literary treaſure of Italy, which was made about twenty years after Tully was born, the Library of Appellicon, that Sylla brought from Athens, and which contained a fine collection of books, particularly the original works of Ariſtotle and Theophraſtus*, authors the fitteſt of any to promote a genuine and elegant taſte, the greateſt and beſt critics, and among the beſt writers which Greece had produced. The works of Ariſtotle have ever been, and will continue to be, the great ſtandard of juſt criticiſm in compoſitions of every kind†.

THUS I have given you a ſhort ſketch of the growing intercourſe which the Romans had with the inhabitants of Greece, of the

* Plut. in Vit. Syl.

† Peripatetici autem etiam hæc ipſa, quæ propria oratorum putas eſſe adjumenta, atque ornamenta dicendi ab ſe peti vincerent oportere: ac non ſolum meliora, ſed etiam multa plura Ariſtotelem Theophraſtumque de his rebus, quam omnes dicendi magiſtros, ſcripſiſſe. Cic. de Orat. Lib. 1.

pro-

progreſs their language made at Rome, and of the importation of the works of Greek writers and ingenious artiſts with which Italy was enriched at different times, from the concluſion of the firſt Macedonian war, till ſome time after the birth of Cicero. That theſe circumſtances muſt have been favourable for promoting a genuine taſte among the Romans, will hardly be denied.

HORACE obſerves with a ſeeming regret, that it was late before his countrymen applied the force of their genius to the ſtudy of the fine writings of Greece; but perhaps they began to attend to, and reliſh thoſe noble models at a time the moſt proper to enable them to excel, or produce works capable of rivaling their charming exemplars. Had they done it ſooner, their language, yet unformed, had been incapable of producing what was excellent, and their manners and genius, too rough and unpoliſhed, had been leſs happily prepared for reliſhing the beauties of the elegant compoſitions of Greece, and for cultivating the fine

fine arts. We know 'tis no favorable circumſtance to the improvement of an individual, that one begins too early to ſtudy any art or ſcience. Incapable of making any progreſs at a premature period of life, the mind retains a diſguſt and unwillingneſs to renew the attempt at a more proper ſeaſon. What happens among individuals, may happen in a complex ſociety or political body.

THE firſt application of the induſtry of men muſt be to procure the neceſſaries of life; by agriculture to ſupply themſelves with food; by ſimple manufactures to furniſh themſelves with cloaths; by ſurrounding their towns with walls, to defend themſelves from ſudden attacks; and by eſtabliſhing laws, to ſecure their property, and the peaceable enjoyment of the fruits of their labour. When ſome progreſs is made in theſe articles, and when human ingenuity has found out methods of facilitating labour, by which one man can do a great deal more than is neceſ-

ſary to ſupply his own wants, and thus ſome of the ſociety become exempted from corporeal toil, the human mind, ſtimulated by a love of excelling and being diſtinguiſhed, begins to think of improvements, and to add what is convenient to what is neceſſary; 'till at laſt the views of men being extended, and their genius and taſte refined, the elegancies and pleaſures of life come to be thought of, the productions of men of ſuperior talents are ſought after, poems are read with pleaſure, and pictures and ſtatues are beheld with delight.

Navigia atque agri culturas, mœnia, leges,
Arma, vias, veſtes, & cætera de genere horum,
Præmia, delicias, quoque vitæ funditùs omnes,
Carmina, picturas & dædala ſigna polire,
Uſus & impigræ ſimul experientia mentis,
Paulatim docuit pedetentim progredientes;
Sic unum quicquid paulatim protrahit ætas
In medium, ratioque in luminis eruit oras:

Namque

Namque aliud ex alio clareſcere corde videmus
Artibus ad ſummum donec venere cacumen *.

I could not forbear tranſcribing theſe lines from a poet of a moſt original and beautiful genius, whoſe work, though the main principles of his favorite ſyſtem are the moſt abſurd imaginable, will be an immortal proof to what perfection poetry was brought among the Romans, by one who died before Octavius was born, or Julius Cæſar created perpetual dictator.

One indeed muſt be little acquainted with the Hiſtory of the beſt Roman writers, who does not know that the nobleſt compoſitions which Rome ever produced, were the works of thoſe who were born in the days of freedom. I ſhall name only a few of the moſt eminent of them; writers, who, by the concurring teſtimony of all good judges, have been allowed to be the moſt perfect and finiſhed in their different ways.

* Lucret. Lib. 5.

I HAVE already taken notice of Lucretius, the greateſt of all didactive poets. I ought to have mentioned before him, becauſe he was prior in time, Terence, the beautiful ſimplicity and elegant correctneſs of whoſe compoſitions have always been admired. The works of this writer, while thoſe of other comic wits fall into oblivion and diſrepute with the modes and faſhionable follies of the times for which they were wrote, will ſtill be read and admired while men are men, or the great ſtrokes of human characters continue to be the ſame. Terence died an hundred and ten years before the battle of Pharſalia.

SALUST the Hiſtorian, and Catullus the poet, whoſe great merit in their different ways is ſo well known, and ſo little diſputed, that to do any more than name them would be an unneceſſary taſk, were born much about the ſame time, thirty eight years before the battle of Pharſalia, as is commonly thought, and were both dead before the victory at

Actium had eſtabliſhed the empire of Auguſtus.

HORACE was eighteen years of age at the time of the battle of Pharſalia; he was ſent to Rome by his father when he was young, and had an education equally liberal with thoſe who were of a much higher rank;

----Puerum eſt auſus Romam portare docendum
Artes quas doceat quivis eques, atque ſenator
Semet prognatos. --------

From the genteel manner in which he was taken care of, as appears from the lines, that immediately follow thoſe I have juſt now tranſcribed, we may naturally ſuppoſe he was upon a footing of equality with the moſt liberal of the Roman youth, and in ſuch ſociety had his heart warmed with a love of freedom, and with ſuch principles as afterwards made him appear at the battle of Philippi among the friends of Brutus and of liberty *.

* See Shaft. Advice to an author.

VIRGIL

VIRGIL was about five years older than Horace, and in all probability educated in the ſame principles; though, peaceful and gentle in his diſpoſitions, we do not find that he took up arms againſt Octavius.

LIVY, it muſt be acknowledged, wrote his Hiſtory during the reign of Auguſtus, and even ſurvived that emperor about four years; but as he died in an advanced age, in his ſeventy ſixth year, the republic may claim the honour of having educated and formed this maſterly Hiſtorian, ſince he muſt have been twenty eight years old, when the victory of Actium put an end to the reſiſtance that was made to Octavius, and fully eſtabliſhed his ſupreme power. Unfortunately, indeed, that part of his Hiſtory, which related the noble ſtruggles in defence of liberty, during the laſt period of the republic, is loſt; but from the teſtimony given of it, in the works of another great Hiſtorian, we may eaſily conceive the ſpirit it breathed.----This elegant and candid writer, though he enjoyed a ſhare of the friendſhip, which Auguſtus had the

prudence to ſhow to all the great geniuſes who flouriſhed in his time, yet was true to the cauſe of liberty. He was ſo far from branding the names of Brutus and Caſſius with the odious appellations of robbers and parricides, which were afterwards given them out of flattery to the emperors, that he often mentioned them as illuſtrious men, and beſtowed ſuch praiſes on Pompey, that Auguſtus uſed to call him a Pompeian *.

The birth of Ovid and Tibullus is commonly ſuppoſed to have been in that year, when Hirtius and Panſa were conſuls; and Propertius is thought to have been born a few years before. Some people indeed imagine, they have probable reaſons to conclude that Tibullus was born twenty years before that

* Titus Livius elcquentiæ et fidei præclarus in primis, Cn. Pompeium tantis laudibus tulit, ut *Pompeianum* eum Auguſtus appellaret: neque id amicitiæ eorum offecit. Scipionem, Affranium, hunc ipſum Caſſium, hunc Brutum nuſquam *latrones et Parricidas*, quæ nunc vocabula imponuntur, ſæpe ut inſignes viros nominat.
Tacit. Ann. Lib. 4.

period;

period; if ſo, more than half his life was ſpent, when Rome was yet free. But even bringing his birth down as low as that of his friend Ovid, this triumvirate of poets and friends, whoſe works, written with true elegance, will be admired in every poliſhed age, were born, while Julius Cæſar was ſtill alive, and ſo far from having any reaſon to be real and hearty friends to Auguſtus, that they had much cauſe of reſentment againſt him. Tibullus and Propertius, born and educated among thoſe who ſtrenuouſly oppoſed the lawleſs attempts of Octavius, muſt have imbibed in their moſt tender years a love of liberty, and hatred to Auguſtus. 'Tis probable that the father of Tibullus was killed fighting againſt Octavius, and that his eſtate became a prey to the rapacious ſoldiers. 'Tis the common opinion that the father of Propertius was one of thoſe three hundred Roman citizens, whom Auguſtus, after he had taken Peruſia, and they had ſurrendered to his mercy, inhumanly ſacrificed at the altar of Julius, and to whoſe petitions for pardon, and apologies for their conduct, he made no other

anſwer than this, *They muſt die* *. That Propertius loſt his fortune too, in the cauſe of freedom, is apparent from his works †.

THOUGH Ovid never bore arms againſt Auguſtus, and wiſhed him well, as he himſelf informs us ‡, when few of his country-

* Perusiâ captâ, in plurimos animadvertit, orare veniam vel excuſare ſe conantibus una voce occurrens, *moriendum eſſe.* Scribunt quidam trecentos ex deditiis electos utriuſque ordinis ad aram divo Julio extructam idibus Martiis mactatos. Suet. in Auſt.

To this Propertius himſelf probably alludes in the laſt Elegy of his firſt Book.

Si Perusina tibi patriæ ſunt nota ſepulchra
Italiæ duris funera temporibus,
Cum Romana ſuos egit diſcordia cives;
Sit mihi præcipuè pulvis Etruſca dolor.
Tu projecta mei perpeſſa es membra propinqui
Tu nullo miſeri contegis oſſa ſolo.

† Nam tua cum multa verſarent rura juvenci,
Abſtulit excultas pertica triſtis opes. Lib. 4. Eleg. 1.

‡ ———— Nec contraria dicor
Arma, nec hoſtiles eſſe ſecutus opes.
Optavi peteres cœleſtia ſidera tardè,
Parſque fuit turbæ parva precantis idem.
Ovid. Triſt. Lib. 2.

men

men did ſo, yet he incurred the diſpleaſure of the emperor, and without being allowed to ſtand a trial before the ſenate *, or any proper judge, was baniſhed to a diſtant and diſagreeable country. His offence yet remains a ſecret, but that it was rather a fault than a crime is highly probable: the puniſhment he ſuffered was therefore certainly ſevere, as well as arbitrary, and notwithſtanding Auguſtus's boaſted lenity, Ovid was very little obliged to him.

IF to the celebrated names of Terence, Lucretius, Saluſt, Catullus, Virgil, Horace, Livy, Ovid, Propertius and Tibullus, we add thoſe of Tully and Julius Cæſar himſelf, the admired liſt of the geniuſes of what is called the Auguſtan age, will be compleat; for though the names of many, and ſome ſmall pieces or fragments of ſeveral others, are handed down to us, yet thoſe I have mentioned are

* Nec mea decreto damnaſti facta ſenatus,
Nec mea, ſelecto judice, juſſa fuga eſt. Ibid.

the principal, and to their luſtre 'tis owing that the age, in which they lived, ſhines, and will for ever ſhine forth with ſuch diſtinguiſhed brightneſs in the annals of mankind.

It may ſeem odd that I mention Julius Cæſar among thoſe writers who were formed by freedom, and who are quoted as examples of the happy influence of liberty upon elegance and taſte, ſince he himſelf overthrew the free conſtitution of his country. But though Cæſar, puſhed on by ambition and a too violent love of power, by force of arms became perpetual dictator, and trampled upon the conſtitution of his country, his taſte was formed and corrected by freedom. 'Twas liberty, 'twas the talents neceſſary to make one become eminent and powerful in a free ſtate, 'twas the ſtruggles which Cæſar had in his youth with a multitude of free and illuſtrious antagoniſts, and the ambition he had to excel in every thing, that formed his genius, his taſte, and thoſe various abilities, which, unfortunately for freedom itſelf, enabled

bled him to get the better of all oppoſition, and make himſelf maſter of the republic.

No ſooner were the Romans ſubjected to the arbitrary will of an emperor, than the genius and taſte of Rome were at a ſtand. The protection Auguſtus gave to the great geniuſes, who were formed in the time of liberty, and who flouriſhed when fortune raiſed him to imperial ſway, prevented, indeed, for ſome time, the bad effects, that his power naturally had upon taſte from becoming apparent. From the ſketch I have given, you ſee that the Auguſtan age was rendered immortal by thoſe, who were born before that period; nay, that one half of the great writers I have mentioned died before ever the name of Auguſtus was heard of in the world: for among them, I may reckon Tully and Cæſar, the laſt of whom only ſaw him a mere boy, and the firſt was cruelly put to death, when Octavius was yet no more than an ambitious youth, aſſociated with others for the deſtruction of freedom; but 'twas not till ſixteen years after the death of Cicero, that he

he aſſumed the title of Auguſtus, and the ſupreme dominion of the Roman empire. However, I do not know how it happens, that, people include, though 'tis very inaccurate, in the catalogue of writers of the Auguſtan age, all the fine geniuſes of the laſt age of the republic.

If we reflect upon the ſhortneſs of that period which intervened from the firſt dawnings of elegance and taſte among the Romans, till the deſtruction of their liberty, and conſider that their genius and taſte were at their greateſt perfection, when they loſt their freedom; and could never afterwards be equalled by any of thoſe who were born in the times of ſlavery; we muſt be convinced that the decay of genius was owing to the loſs of freedom, and be obliged to confeſs the intimate connection which ſubſiſts between liberty and true taſte. The power of Auguſtus was ſo far from creating genius, or correcting taſte, that it certainly put a ſtop to their improvement. Perhaps the very authors who wrote in his time, but were born

in

in the days of the republic, would have been more perfect, had they not ſurvived the ruins of liberty. I cannot indeed conceive the lyre to have been touched with more exquiſite Art than it was by Horace; but had Virgil wrote before Rome was ſubjected to an imperial Lord, his compoſitions would perhaps have been animated with a nobler fire, and his own majeſty might have been united with all the original ſpirit of Homer.

HORACE obſerves, that the Roman genius, ſublime and lively, was naturally well enough calculated for tragedy; but from the account he gives of their own tragedians, it appears that they were far from being perfect, and that though they diſcovered ſome beauties, yet theſe were tarniſhed by abundance of faults. Their tranſlations from the Greek too, as he informs us in the ſame place, were not ſufficiently correct *.

To

* ——————— Quærere cœpit
Quid Sophocles, et Theſpis, et Æſchylus utile ferrent,
Tentavit quoque rem, ſi dignè vertere poſſet;
Et placuit ſibi, naturâ ſublimis et acer;

To what cauſe then ſhall we aſcribe this fact, that among the Roman claſſics we meet with no tragedian that we can compare with the Grecian Æſchylus, Sophocles, or Euripides? indeed that we meet with none at all of the claſſic age? for thoſe which they had, have not been preſerved from the ruins of time; but from the character given of them by the beſt judges among the Romans themſelves, we may be certain that they were infinitely inferior to the Greek tragedians. This remarkable deficiency, this want of tragic writers among the Roman claſſics, can only be accounted for by aſcribing it to the alteration, which was made in the conſtitution of Rome; a period was put to the liberty of the Romans, at the very time, when, by the natural progreſs of improvement, they would, if they had continued free, have excelled in tragedy. "A perfect tragedy is the nobleſt "production of human nature," to uſe the

Nam ſpirat tragicum ſatis, et felicitèr audet;
Sed turpem putat in ſcriptis metuitque lituram.
Epiſt. Lib. 2.

words

words of Mr. Addiſon.* What is beſt and nobleſt cannot be firſt, but muſt come laſt, and be produced among thoſe who are already accompliſhed. Sophocles and Euripides were preceded by Homer; and, had the Romans continued longer free, Virgil would have been followed by tragedians worthy of the high Roman ſpirit, and the Latin tongue might have boaſted of writers in that way, very different from a Seneca †, who wrote after Rome had been fully enſlaved, her genius decayed, and her taſte corrupted.

IN vain do we look among the Romans, after this, for writers equal to thoſe of the Ciceronian age. "Sint Mecænates, non dee-"runt, Flacce, Marones ‡, may do very well in an epigram, but it will not be found to anſwer in fact. The liberty, the ſpirit, and knowledge of an age, muſt form the genius and taſte of the writers of that age. 'Twas not owing to the patronage of Mecænas that Virgil was

* Spectator, No. 39. † Not the philoſopher.
‡ Martial.

ſuch

ſuch an excellent poet, or to the want of ſuch patrons that none comparable to him appeared afterwards. The noble genius, that dwelt among the free citizens of Rome, diſdained to inhabit an enſlaved country, or to attend upon the ſubjects of a deſpotic emperor. The protection, that Mecænas gave the fine writers, who flouriſhed when he became miniſter of the Roman empire, hath indeed rendered his name immortal, and made the generality of people believe that he was a man of taſte, the very reverſe of which is true: for as he was the firſt miniſter of arbitrary power, ſo he gave the firſt example among the Romans of the fatal influence of deſpotiſm upon taſte, by his own vitiated compoſitions. Had Rome remained free, he perhaps might have been a great pattern of Roman eloquence, but too much proſperity and luxury corrupted his taſte, unnerved his genius, and rendered his compoſitions quite unmanly. "Ingenioſus "vir ille fuit, magnum exemplum Romanæ "eloquentiæ daturus, niſi illum enervaſſet, "felicitas, imo, caſtraſſet," as Seneca ſays of

of him in his nineteenth epiſtle *. Thus the firſt miniſter of Auguſtus, notwithſtanding all the favour of the emperor, notwithſtanding all his ambition to be reckoned a man of wit

* Beſides what is quoted above, there are many paſſages in Seneca, which demonſtrate the bad taſte of Mecænas.

Theſe lines of his which he cites Epiſt. 101.

Debilem facito manu
Debilem pede, coxâ;
Tuber adſtrue gibberum,
Lubricos quate dentes;
Vita dum ſupereſt, bene eſt.
Hanc mihi vel acutâ
Si ſedeam cruce, ſuſtine.

Are wretched, and demonſtrate that his pretended admiration of Virgil muſt have been mere affectation. The author of theſe lines could never ſincerely admire the *Uſque adeone mori miſerum eſt*, of that poet. Indeed, as Seneca ſays, one would hardly think he had ever heard Virgil recite this line. Shakeſpear, who never makes one ſpeak out of character, has put ſimilar ſentiments in the mouth of a coward, who was willing to purchaſe life by a ſacrifice of his ſiſter's virtue.

The

wit and genius, and notwithſtanding nature had originally endued him with a conſiderable ſhare of parts, became an unchaſte finical writer, and gave a ſtriking proof, how little

> The wearieſt and moſt loathed worldly life,
> Which age, ach, penury, impriſonment,
> Can lay on Nature, is a paradiſe,
> To what we fear of death.
>
> Meaſure for Meaſure.

Seneca, in his 114th Epiſtle, after having given a ſpecimen of the obſcure, involved, licentious ſtyle of Mecænas, ſhews at great length, how it aroſe from his character and circumſtances. Hoc iſtæ ambages compoſitionis, hoc verba tranſverſa, hoc ſenſus magni quidem ſæpe, ſed enervati dum exeunt, cuivis manifeſtum facient, motum illi felicitate nimia caput; quod vitium hominis eſſe interdum, interdum temporis ſolet. See alſo Epiſt. 92. at the end. The calamiſtra (Curling Irons) of Mecænas are taken notice of by the author of the dialogue on the cauſes of the decay of Roman eloquence. How infinitely inferior are ſuch falſe ornaments to the ſimple dreſs of genuine eloquence! One would rather chooſe that an orator ſhould wear the rougheſt garb, than the gaudy and vitious dreſs of luxury and effeminacy. Malim herculè C. Gracchi impetum, aut L. Craſſi maturitatem, quam calamiſtros Mecænatis aut tinnitus Gallionis, adeo malim oratorem vel hirta toga induere, quam fucatis et meretriciis veſtibus inſignire.

in-

influence the favour of Auguſtus, even when moſt laviſhly beſtowed, could have in promoting genius or correcting taſte.

AUGUSTUS indeed perceived, and uſed to ridicule the effeminate and affected ſtyle of his favourite *, yet he himſelf fell into a manner no leſs vitiated. Letters written with his own hand, as Suetonius informs us, diſcovered what ridiculous phraſes he made uſe of; and how foppiſhly he attempted to alter ſome words. To expreſs the velocity of any thing done in a hurry, by ſaying *it was done more quickly than aſparagus is boiled*, was undoubtedly ſomething the very reverſe of the ſublime; to exhort one to bear preſent calamities, by ſaying, *let us bear this Cato*, was certainly a wretched conceit, and yet theſe were the phraſes of Auguſtus †. There is

* Exagitabat nonnunquam in primis Mecænatem ſuum, cujus myrobrecheis (ut ait) concinnos uſquequaque perſequitur, et imitando per Jocum irridet.

Suet. in Vit. Auguſt. Cap. 86.

* Cum hortatur ferenda eſſe præſentia qualiacunque ſint, contenti ſimus hoc Catone, et ad exprimendam

is ſomething very remarkable in the laſt of them: the awful name of Cato muſt have been extremely odious to him, and the remembrance of his virtues diſagreeable. The glorious ſtruggles of this brave citizen, in defence of freedom and virtue, muſt have reminded him of his own baſeneſs in betraying both. Nothing can be more inſupportable to ſuch men as Auguſtus than characters like that of Cato: hence the origin of this phraſe, which, as phraſes often do, betrays the ſecret and heart-felt ſentiments of its author. Such a baneful influence had the ſpirit of ſlavery upon its firſt great patrons among the Romans. An intimate familiarity with ſuch men might have corrupted, but could never improve, the taſte of any one. Nothing can be more abſurd and trifling, than to aſcribe the merit of the fine writers of thoſe times to the patronage of the emperor or his mi-

feſtinatæ rei velocitatem, velocius quam aſparagi coquantur: ponit aſſiduè pro ſtulto baceolum, et pro pullo, puleiaceum, et pro cerito vaceroſum, et vapidè ſeſe habere, pro malè; et betizare pro languere, &c.

Suet. in Aug. Cap. 87.

niſter,

niſter. They knew well how to make a proper uſe of thoſe geniuſes who then flouriſhed, but who had been formed in other times and by converſation with different men. Taſte was at its greateſt height in Rome when Auguſtus came to the helm of affairs, and from that moment began to decline. 'Twas not all at once indeed extinguiſhed; human ſociety and the genius of men muſt be poliſhed or made barbarous by degrees. But as the Romans, from the period when they began to be civilized, had made the moſt rapid progreſs in taſte; and, in all probability, would have attained to a far greater degree of perfection, at leaſt in ſome branches, had not the abſolute power of the emperors checked their genius; ſo, from the time that a period was put to their liberty, they as rapidly declined, and the fatal effects of the change of their conſtitution upon taſte became viſible. Some writers appeared indeed, in the days of the emperors, of extraordinary merit. They were however few in number, and lived not in a period ſo diſtant from the Ciceronian age, but that we may naturally

ſuppoſe, the noble ſpirit of that age might have been communicated to them, and the animating genius of liberty not yet altogether extinguiſhed in Roman breaſts.

In a dialogue, thought by ſome to have been written by Tacitus, but, as others think, by Quintilian, one of the ſpeakers obſerves, that he does not know, why Cæſar and Cicero ſhould rather be claſſed among the antient orators, than among thoſe of their times, ſince the ſame perſon might have heard Cicero, and been preſent alſo at ſome of their own orations. He indeed brings the example of a man, who lived to a great age; but certainly the orations which the ſpeakers in that dialogue made in their youth, might have been heard by one who had been preſent when Tully ſpoke, and they might all have been formed under thoſe, who lived ſome time in the Ciceronian age *.

Thus,

* Sed Ciceronem et Cæſarem, &c.——cur antiquis temporibus potius adſcribatis quam noſtris non video. Nam ut de Cicerone ipſo loquar, Hirtio nempe et

THUS, the age of Tacitus, ſo far from being very diſtant from that of Cicero, may in ſome meaſure be reckoned the ſame; and in this age flouriſhed the laſt of the great Roman authors; for Quintilian, the Pliny's, and Juvenal were cotemporary with him. After this, even all the favour of emperors, who were both good men and great philoſophers, could *not* keep up the antient ſpirit,

et Panſa conſulibus, ut Tiro libertus ejus ſcribit VII. Idus Decemb. occiſus eſt, quo anno Divus Auguſtus in locum Panſæ et Hirtii ſe et Q. Pedium coſſ. ſuffecit. Statue VI et L annos, quibus mox divus Auguſtus remp. rexit: adjice Tiberii XXIII. et prope quadriennium Caii, ac bis quaternos denos Claudii et Neronis annos, atque ipſum Galbæ et Othonis, et Vitellii unum annum, ac VI. jam felicis hujus principatûs ſtationem qua Veſpaſianus remp. fovet. C et XX anni, ab interitu Ciceronis in hunc diem colliguntur, unius hominis ætas. Nam ipſe ego in Britannia vidi ſenem, qui ſe fateretur et pugnæ interfuiſſe, qua Cæſarem inferentem arma Britanniæ, arcere littoribus, et pellere agreſſi ſunt: ita ſi eum, qui armatus C. Cæſari reſtitit, vel captivitas, vel voluntas, vel fatum aliquod in urbem pertraxiſſet, idem Cæſarem ipſum et Ciceronem audire potuit et noſtris quoque actionibus intereſſe.

Dialog. de Cauſ. Corrupt. Eloquent.

or produce writers comparable to thoſe of the days of freedom.

DESPOTISM and a falſe taſte ſeem to have gone hand in hand, 'till both appeared in their genuine colours. Some appearances were kept up in the days of Auguſtus; even in the days of Tiberius there were ſome remains of dying liberty, "manebant etiam "tunc veſtigia morientis libertatis," as Tacitus ſays in the firſt Book of his Annals. The good emperors, who came after thoſe monſters that ſucceeded Tiberius, revived the drooping ſpirit of the Romans, and in their time we meet with ſome uſeful writers, but of a taſte much inferior to that of the age of freedom. As deſpotiſm approached, taſte and genius retired from among the Romans, till at laſt we do not even meet with a faint reſemblance of what they once were; freedom of ſpirit gave way to mean flattery, noble ideas to wretched conceits, a ſimple and nervous ſtyle to a florid unmanly one, and a ſevere correctneſs to a reliſh for whatever was vitious, tawdry or foppiſh.

THUS,

THUS, my Lord, I have endeavoured to anſwer the arguments that may be brought for the ſuperior advantages, which taſte is by ſome people thought to have in an abſolute government, from the common opinion about the influence of the protection which Auguſtus afforded the muſes. By a ſhort ſketch I have ſhewn that the laſt age of the republic formed the great writers of the Auguſtan age, that the emperor's power put a ſtop to farther improvement, that, in all probability, had the Romans continued longer free, they would have arrived at a much higher degree of perfection, at leaſt in ſome branches, and that arbitrary power and bad taſte gained ground at the ſame time, till at laſt deſpotiſm was fully eſtabliſhed, and taſte thoroughly depraved.

I intended to have anſwered the objections which are brought from the age of Lewis XIV. but this I muſt delay: the preſent letter has been much longer than I thought it would have been, but I ſhall make no apology, as

'tis wrote in vindication of the honours which juſtly belong to freedom, and in defence of her cauſe, a cauſe which I hope you will ever revere in your heart and ſupport by your conduct.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

On the INFLUENCE of LIBERTY upon TASTE, and of the Age of LEWIS XIV.

MY LORD,

EVERY gentleman ought to build his opinion of nations, of men, and of the different ages of the world, upon rational principles; one ought however eſpecially to be careful to reaſon juſtly with reſpect to thoſe ages which have certainly been the moſt accompliſhed, and from which, maxims will often be drawn, and examples brought of whatever is moſt hurtful or beneficial to mankind. I have endeavoured to ſhew in a former letter how far the common opinion with regard to the influence of Auguſtus's power upon ge-

genius and taſte is unjuſt, and how much the generality of people, miſled by the delicate flattery paid to him and Mecænas by writers formed in the days of liberty, but who ſurvived the republic, and were the greateſt ornaments of the court of Auguſtus, have miſtaken the real genius of this emperor and his miniſter, and the influence of their power upon true taſte. I ſhall now offer you ſome obſervations concerning the age of Lewis XIV. They are ſuch as have occurred to me in reading the celebrated writers and hiſtorians of that age.

PERSUADED of the truth of this general propoſition, that in proportion as a country is free, true taſte will flouriſh, unleſs the happy influence of freedom be counterbalanced by other unfavourable circumſtances, and that the protection of no ſingle man can create genius or taſte, which muſt be formed by the peculiar circumſtances of the nation and age in which men of taſte and genius appear; I am convinced ſufficient reaſons may be given for the figure which the French writers

of

of the age of Lewis XIV. make, and will for ever make in the annals of the world, without having recourſe to the influence of his ſupreme power, or drawing a concluſion unfavourable to liberty. If I ſhall not be ſo happy as to point out the circumſtances which enabled the fine geniuſes of France in that age to adorn their works with ſo much elegance and correctneſs, without aſcribing it principally to the patronage which their monarch gave to the ſciences and arts, your Lordſhip muſt impute it to my want of ſkill, and not to the badneſs of the argument which I endeavour to ſupport.

IT hath often been obſerved that there was a great reſemblance between the courts of Auguſtus and Lewis, and that many ſimilar circumſtances contributed to immortalize the reigns of both. A great deal of common-place flattery has been moſt laviſhly offered up, and virtues and talents aſcribed to both, which perhaps neither of them had any title to lay claim to.

But that they were both fortunate, is undoubtedly true. The nobleſt fortune that an emperor or king can attain to, is to become ſovereign of a people at a time when they are eminent for their accompliſhments, for the illuſtrious figure they make in the world, and for the improvements they have made in whatever can tend to embelliſh life, or render ſociety more rational and polite. Such were the Romans and French, when Auguſtus and Lewis came to ſupreme power. Rome had produced her Lucretius, Salluſt, Cicero! Paris had produced her Corneille, Molliere, Paſcal! I have mentioned theſe three, becauſe it is allowed by every one, that both the French poetry and proſe were carried by them to a degree of elegance and perfection, perhaps unequalled, but certainly not excelled by any, who have appeared ſince their time, and becauſe the youngeſt of them (Paſcal) was born fifteen years before Lewis, and publiſhed his famous Provincials when that prince was only ſixteen years of age, and cannot be ſuppoſed to have had any in-

fluence in forming or promoting a good taſte in France.

IT may indeed be ſaid, and with much appearance of reaſon too, what is this to the purpoſe, and how does this ſhew that an arbitrary government is unfriendly to taſte? ſince 'tis equally the ſame, whether theſe writers were born in the time of Lewis XIV. or in that of the kings his predeceſſors. But, my Lord, 'tis not the ſame. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that the period, when the French taſte was gradually improving, and attained to ſuch perfection, was a period when real liberty was gaining ground; when, though the kings of France became more powerful, the rights of the bulk of the people were enlarged, their ſpirits animated, and a deſire of knowledge and a freedom of inquiry highly prevalent in France.

It does not follow that in proportion as the powers of the ſovereign are encreaſed, the people become ſlaves: That nation is moſt

moſt free where moſt people are free, to uſe words which, I have heard it ſaid, were ſpoke by a man of great learning and experience upon a bill to take away certain juriſdictions, that prevented the happy influence of freedom from reaching to the remote parts of this iſland. The kings of France had for a long period of years been endeavouring to overthrow that ſyſtem which put it in the power of a few great men to deſpiſe their ſovereign, to throw their country into confuſion, whenever their pride prompted them to it, and to trample upon the generality of the people. The methods which thoſe monarchs found it neceſſary to take to eſtabliſh their own authority, happily for the bulk of the people, were calculated in ſome meaſure to promote their independence and liberty.

The adminiſtration of juſtice is of the higheſt conſequence in every country. They who have it in their power to determine concerning the lives and property of the people muſt

muſt have the higheſt authority, and if they are not obliged to judge according to a certain ſyſtem of law, but as their own wills dictate, muſt become arbitrary and deſpotic. Such were the great Lords in France during the prevalence of the Feudal government: Leaders and captains in the fields; they were ſupreme judges in time of peace, and, by having every thing in their diſpoſal, were the abſolute and uncontroulable maſters of the people who could have recourſe to none but them for the preſervation or recovery of their property, and thus were indeed their mere ſlaves. ------ "Ce n'etoit plus des ſubjets, "que des peuples qui pouvoient être armés "contre le roi par leur ſeigneurs, et qui, "pour conſerver leur bien, ne connoiſſoient "d'autre Tribunal que celui de ce même "ſeigneur*," a ſhort but an accurate and comprehenſive deſcription of the feudal ſyſtem. To appoint judges, who ſhould take cognizance of the determinations of thoſe tribunals, redreſs the grievances of the people,

* Henaut. Remarques ſur la troiſieme race.

and

and judge according to law, was at once to free the commons from oppreſſion, to extend the power of the ſovereign, and to eſtabliſh a regular ſyſtem of laws; in a word, 'twas to diffuſe liberty among the bulk of the people, and, as Mr. Voltaire in his lively manner expreſſes it, to give five hundred thouſand families reaſon to rejoice at what perhaps fifty murmured *.

That this was the method the kings of France actually took, you will be convinced by reading their hiſtories; particularly the conciſe and accurate one of Henaut, every page of which will inſtruct you, and enlarge your ideas, eſpecially on this ſubject. I have only taken notice of this alteration of the French government in general, becauſe 'tis an illuſtrious proof that liberty is friendly to genius and taſte, ſince that period, in which the French

* C'eſt à lui (Louis XI.) que le peuple doit le premier abaiſement des grands. Environs cinquante familles en ont murmuré, et plus de cinq cens milles dû s'en feliciter. Hiſt. Gener. Louis XI.

were

were making a gradual progreſs in learning and politeneſs, was alſo a period in which freedom was gaining ground, and the bulk of the people emerging from the meaneſt ſervitude. In this period parliaments were eſtabliſhed, and judges appointed, who by degrees became more and more reſpectable, able to defend the people from oppreſſion, the awful diſpenſers of juſtice, and the guardians of law. The noble and generous ſtruggles, which the parliaments of France, particularly that of Paris, have lately, and for many years paſt, made in defence of the fundamental laws of their country, have merited and obtained the applauſe of all Europe*, and made it no raſh aſſertion to affirm that their inſtitution and growing power hath been a favourable circumſtance to the liberty of France.

* Le parlement de Paris, s'eſt conduit depuis pres de deux ans avec une fermité et une prudence qui lui on valu des remercimens du prince, l'affection de tous les bons François, et l'eſtime de toute l'Europe.

Mes Penſées.

But not only had the alteration which was made in the adminiſtration of juſtice an influence to enlarge the freedom of the people; that which was made in military affairs had the ſame effect, and equally tended to promote taſte. While the feudal ſyſtem prevailed, the Great, retired in ſullen pride, ſhut up in their gloomy caſtles, defended by their vaſſals and ſlaves, and entertained by martial feats, by tournaments and ſavage combats, were utterly ignorant of every thing that was elegant and polite. When they had taken the field againſt a neighbouring rival, or appeared with their vaſſals in the general army of their country, they returned as ſoon as war was at an end to their own domains, accompanied with their followers, and never lived at court or among their equals. Flattered by, and proudly dictating to, their inferiors, 'tis eaſy to conceive what an influence this muſt have had to encourage the Great in their follies, to debaſe the minds of the people, and to prevent both from making any improvements in knowledge or taſte.

By

BY deſtroying this ſyſtem, the bulk of the people were freed from a perpetual and ſervile attendance upon their ſuperiors; the Great, having leſs employment at home, were attracted to court *, their Taſte was changed, genteel amuſements took place of rougher exerciſes, themſelves and their country were gradually improved, reading became faſhionable, and ſociety grew more rational and polite. In vain were theſe improvements attempted to be made, during the continuance of the Feudal ſyſtem, a ſyſtem, of all others, the leaſt friendly to the fine arts, or to the liberties of the bulk of mankind, which are always connected. Kings in vain encouraged letters: in vain did Charles V. of France collect a library of nine hundred Volumes, a great number before the art of printing was invented: the genius of his country was againſt him, and defeated the influence of that protection and encouragement he gave to learning and arts †. The liberality of princes

* Hen. Rem. ſur la troiſieme race.

† Le roi de France Charles V. qui raſſembla environs 900 Volumes, cens ans avant que la Bibliotheque

princes can have but a very ſmall effect, in promoting genius or taſte, among a people whoſe minds are debaſed by ſervitude. The kings of France, by deſtroying the Feudal ſyſtem, and thus altering the genius of the people, and giving ſpirits to the minds of men, did more to promote knowledge and taſte, than all the rewards and protection, that could be given to the learned and ingenious, before that ſyſtem was overturned, could poſſibly do.

FRANCIS I. whoſe reign is the great epoch of the revival of letters in France, did not hold learning in higher eſteem, or more liberally encourage ſcience and arts than Charles V. whoſe memorable anſwer to one that murmured at the honours which he ſhewed to men of learning, "Science and "the learned cannot be too much honour-"ed; while learning is honoured in this

du Vatican fut fondée par Nicolas V. encouragea en vain les talents: le terrain n'etoit pas preparé pour porter de ces fruits etrangers.

Volt. tom. 2d. See alſo Henaut Charles V.

"king-

" kingdom, it will continue in proſperity, but " when it ſhall be deſpiſed, the kingdom " will decline and fall *," ought for ever to be remembered with applauſe. But the genius of their times was different: the one lived before, and the other after, Lewis XI. who, though a bad man and a cruel prince, laid a foundation for the improvements of arts and ſciences, by freeing the bulk of the people from that dependence and ſervitude in which they were kept, during the prevalence of the Feudal ſyſtem.

ANOTHER memorable event, that happened about a century before the birth of Lewis XIV. muſt have had the greateſt influence to animate the minds of men, and give a ſpur to genius; I mean the reformation, an event intimately connected with a ſpirit of liberty,

* Quelq' un murmuroit de l'honeur qu'il portoit aux gens des lettres, appellés dans ces tems *clercs*; il reſpondit; *les clercs, ou la ſapience*, l'on ne peut trop honorer; et tant que ſapience ſera honoreé en ce royaume, il continuera en proſperité, mais quand deboutée y'ſera, il decherra. *Henaut.*

and a freedom of enquiry. In a letter, which I wrote to you ſome time ago, I took notice of the happy influence this had upon human affairs, and the liberties of Europe in general *. I ſhall at preſent only obſerve, that, in no country, where the reformation did not actually take place, were the proteſtants more numerous or conſiderable than in France. Men of the moſt eminent abilities, who made a figure in the cabinet, and in the field, ſeveral princes of the blood, and many of the *nobleſſe*, as well as a vaſt number of the commons, were of the proteſtant party. The ſtruggles which they made in their own defence, and which were often ſucceſsful; the diſputes which they had with the catholics, not only in the way of arms, but of argument and debate, could not fail of having a conſiderable effect to enlarge the underſtandings of men, to correct their judgments, and to inſpire their imaginations and fancies, with a vivacity and juſtneſs, to be acquired only by practice, and by being often put to the

* See page 41, 42, 43, 47, 48, 49.

neceſſity

neceſſity of defending favourite, or of attacking odious opinions, by being warmly intereſted, and by having an occaſion of exerciſing every faculty of the human mind, and power of the human body, in defence of ourſelves, our country, or our friends.

THIS naturally leads me to take notice of a circumſtance which certainly had the greateſt influence to form the ages both of Auguſtus and Lewis, I mean, the civil wars and contentions, to which they ſucceeded. What an exertion of great talents muſt there have been in Rome, when the Catos, the Ciceros, the Pompeys, the Cæſars, and the Antonys, were at the head of different parties, and, with all their abilities, endeavouring to ſupport their own, or to weaken that of their enemy's! What a noble ſtruggle muſt it have been in France, when the Henrys *, the Sullys, the de Mornays, the Condés, the Turennes, the De Retzs, the Rochefoucaults, the Richlieus, and the Ma-

* Henry IV.

zarins, drew their ſwords and made uſe of their eloquence to ſupport the intereſts of contending parties, and to defend the principles of oppoſite ſyſtems *.

THUS, my Lord, I have endeavoured to prove that in France, during the reigns of ſeveral kings preceding Lewis XIV. the rights of the bulk of the people were enlarged, their underſtandings improved by a freedom of enquiry, their ſpirits animated, and their taſte made manly and bold by perpetual ſtruggles about independence and freedom, both ſacred and civil: in a word, that a ſpirit of liberty prevailed and formed thoſe geniuſes, who flouriſhed when he came to the throne, and during the laſt years of his fa-

† Ces deux princes ſortoient des guerres civiles, de ce tems, ou les peuples, toujours armées, nourris ſans ceſſe au milieu des perils, entêtès des plus hardies deſeins, ne voyent rien ou ils ne puiſſent atteindre, de ce tems au les evenements heureux et malheureux, mille fois repetées, etendent les idees, fortifient l'ame a force d'Epreuves, augmentent ſon reſſort, et lui donnent ce deſir de gloire qui ne manque jamais de produire de grandes choſes. *Henaut.*

ther's

ther's reign. I ſay, during the laſt years of his father's reign; for it is of importance to remember that, in the time of Richlieu's adminiſtration, genius and taſte had attained to the higheſt perfection; an unanſwerable proof, that a ſpirit of liberty, and the circumſtances of the times, have a greater influence to form the great writers and artiſts of the times, than even the protection of a court and a miniſter, ſince ſome of the moſt eminent of them met with no encouragement either from the court or miniſtry, but rather the contrary.

THE great Corneille received no favours from Richlieu; nay, 'tis well known that he met with oppoſition from him, and that too much complaiſance to that miniſter made the academy condemn his famous *Cid*. But other circumſtances tended to elevate his genius more than this could depreſs it. Born in an active and illuſtrious age, himſelf endued with great talents, and admired by men, to whom nature had been no leſs bountiful, need we wonder at the ſublimity to which he attained?

tained? need we wonder at the grandeur of his ſentiments, when we reflect upon the ſenſibility of his applauding audience? What an incitement muſt it have been to write well, to perceive a generous tear drop from the great Condé at the pronouncing of a noble and generous ſentiment!*

A LITTLE anecdote concerning the manner in which the ſon of this Condé entertained Marſhal Turenne, during a viſit of two days, which he made to Chantilli, will give you a very different idea of the way in which the illuſtrious men of France were then regaled, from what is to be ſeen in more modern times, and make you eaſily perceive how great the taſte for learning and fine compoſitions muſt have been in France at that time, and how natural it is to expect to meet with fine writers in an age, and among a people, whoſe manners were ſo polite, and whoſe

* Le grand Corneille faiſant pleurer le grand Condé, d'admiration, eſt une époch bien célébre dans l'hiſtoire de l'eſprit humain. *Volt.*

en-

entertainments were ſo rational and inſtructive. "The duke (ſon to the great Condé) "wanting to give an entertainment to M. "De Turenne in which nothing ſhould be "omitted that could be agreeable to that "great general, conſulted Mr. Deſpreaux "about what was moſt proper to read to "him. The ſatyriſt (M. Deſpreaux) was "himſelf engaged to read three Cantos of his "Lutrin; but there were other vacant hours "to fill up, during thoſe two days, when they "hoped to have the pleaſure of entertaining "M. De Turenne. Deſpreaux propoſed "to read the Provincial Letters, which the "duke had not ſeen. They read one of "them for a trial, which his highneſs was ſo "charmed with, that he took the book, and "could not leave off, 'till he had read them "all. M. De Turenne was no leſs delighted "with thoſe letters, which he choſe to hear "read again and again *." Does not this put us in mind of the ſympoſiums of Greece, or

* See a diſcourſe prefixed to the provincial letters. Paris, 1753.

of

of the taſte of thoſe ſocieties at Rome, to which old Cato often reſorted, and which he valued, not on account of exquiſite diſhes and rich wines, but of good company and ingenious converſation. "Neque enim ip-"ſorum conviviorum delectationem volup-"tatibus corporis, magis quam cætu amico-"rum et ſermonibus metiebar *. When ſuch a taſte prevailed at Athens, Rome, and Paris, need we wonder that works were produced, which will render the ages, in which they were wrote, immortal? need we wonder that among the great number of learned, high-ſpirited, and illuſtrious men in every way, with which France then abounded, there aroſe ſome, with geniuſes capable of reforming taſte, and of fixing its ſtandard, by preſenting the public with elegant and noble models? certainly we need not; nor need we be ſurpriſed that the ſublimity and genuine elegance of thoſe writers have not been excelled by any who have appeared ſince the adminiſtrations of Richlieu and Mazarin. By

* Tull. Cat. Maj.

re-

reflecting upon the ſtate of France, immediately before theſe miniſters came to the helm of affairs, by conſidering their conduct and the alteration they made in the conſtitution of their country, the principle I have been endeavouring to eſtabliſh, will be illuſtrated, and confirmed.

HENRY IV. the beſt and moſt amiable of princes, who enjoyed the greateſt happineſs, that can fall to the ſhare of a mortal, and which moſt reſembles that of the Divinity, the heart-felt pleaſure of making millions happy, of diffuſing plenty and joy, and of uſing power to execute the dictates of goodneſs, was at once the ſovereign and friend of his people. Intimately connected, when a prince of the blood, with the ſupporters of liberty on the throne, he was the protector of freedom. Educated a Proteſtant, he continued after he became a Catholic to be the patron of the reformed, and his principal miniſters were of that profeſſion. Generous and free in his own principles, he endeavoured to promote a ſpirit of love and charity among

his ſubjects, to allay all bitterneſs and animoſity, and to put an end to all perſecution. He called together the eſtates of his kingdom, not to force them to a compliance with his own will, nor to deſpiſe their counſels, but with a ſincere intention to follow them. All his actions diſcovered a greatneſs of mind, all his words were the unfeigned pictures of a generous heart: poſterity will for ever remember them with virtuous applauſe; with what emotions of gratitude then muſt they have inſpired the breaſts of his ſubjects, with what admiration muſt they have beheld his actions, and with what rapture muſt they have heard the benevolent expreſſions of his affectionate regard to the intereſts of his country, and of mankind in general! Such qualities would have appeared amiable at all times, but if you reflect upon the ſtate of France for ſome years before Henry came to the throne, you will be convinced, that he muſt have appeared like an angel, ſent from heaven to bleſs mankind; or, as the antients related of their Apollo, to inſpire men with great and beautiful ideas, to make the voice of the muſes

muſes be heard, by putting an end to the horrid noiſe of inhuman war, and to reſcue the people from cruel famine,

Hic bellum lacrymoſum, hic miſeram famem
Peſtemque a populo aget *.

THAT Henry came to the throne, at a time, when the French had been expoſed to the moſt dreadful effects of theſe ſevereſt ſcourges of human kind, is well known. Not inſpired by a generous principle of ſupporting their liberties and laws, or of defending their country againſt a foreign enemy, but inſtigated by inhuman ſuperſtition, the catholics of France had taken up arms to imbrue their hands in the blood of their fellow citizens. The maſſacre of Paris, and the famous ſiege of that city, which happened ſome years after, will be remembered as eternal proofs, what ſuperſtition can prompt its bigotted votaries to do, and ſuffer. Neither age, nor ſex, nor beauty, nor merit, could make

* Hor.

the dagger fall from the hand of the barbarous aſſaſſin: nor could a famine, ſo dreadful as even to inſtigate a wretched mother to eat her own child, oblige the Pariſians to ſurrender their city to one whom they were taught to look upon as accurſed.

HENRY, however, overcame every obſtacle. 'Twas impoſſible for the moſt bigoted to keep up a *league* againſt him, that could any longer prevent his aſcending the throne. Happy was it for France that he became king. To the moſt cruel and tumultuous ſucceeded times the moſt peaceful and generous. Secured in the poſſeſſion of their rights and privileges, and of every thing that they held moſt dear, no one was any longer afraid of falling a victim to the cruelty of a baſe aſſaſſin, or to the inſolence of a haughty minion of power.

THE minds of men, which had been agitated during the preceding reigns, and obliged to make uſe of every effort for ſelf-preſervation and defence, being now no longer kept

kept in perpetual alarm, had leizure to apply that vigour and activity which they had acquired to the embelliſhment of life, and to the improvement of whatever was elegant and polite. What great things Henry did for the eaſe, the plenty, and ſecurity of his people, is well known; what more he might have done, had not an infamous wretch put an untimely period to his glorious career, may be conjectured from what he did. But that, during this reign of freedom and joy, a foundation was laid, for that high reputation the French afterwards acquired for genius and taſte, which, as I obſerved before, appeared in their utmoſt luſtre, during the adminiſtrations of Richelieu and Mazarin, cannot be doubted. Nor is it abſurd to ſuppoſe, that, as the ſpirit of liberty, and the freedom, which prevailed in France before they came to the helm of affairs, contributed greatly to form the ſublime taſte of the illuſtrious writers of their times, ſo a check was given to farther improvement, by the large ſtrides which they made towards arbitrary power.

EVERY body knows with what intrepid boldneſs the firſt, and with what conſummate art the laſt of theſe miniſters aggrandized the power of their maſters, and paved the way to deſpotiſm.

Richelieu, Mazarin, miniſtres immortelles;
Juſqu' au Trone elevés de l'ombre des autels:
Enfans de la fortune et de la politique,
Marcheront a grands pas au pouvoir deſpotique *.

To enter minutely into the alterations which they made in the conſtitution of France would require more time than I can at preſent beſtow upon it: beſides, the fact is allowed on all hands, and there are not more or better helps for acquiring a thorough knowledge of the tranſactions of any country in any period, than of thoſe of France at that time. The principal actors were men of great abilities every way, and being capable of writing, as well as of acting with ſpirit, the world

* Volt. Hen.

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is furniſhed with ample materials to judge of the conduct of all parties, and to form their opinions from the accounts of thoſe who were beſt acquainted with the tranſactions of the times. Your Lordſhip will be greatly inſtructed and amuſed with the original memoirs of that period; but that you may ſee how far the Conſtitution of France was then altered, and its liberty abridged, I ſhall give you the trouble to read ſome ſentences, tranſcribed from eminent French writers, which in a few words will ſhew you what theſe alterations were, better than I could do, and at the ſame time prove the truth of what has been affirmed, that the French government at that period became more abſolute than it had formerly been *.

I COULD

* Ce miniſtre (Richelieu) dont la politique abſoluë avoit violé les anciennes loix du royaume pour etablir l'authorité *immedercé* de ſon maitre, dont il etoit diſpenſateur; avoit conſideré tous les reglemens de cet etat, comme des conceſſions forcecs, et des bornes impoſecs a la puiſſance des roys, plutot que de fondemens ſolides pour bien regner; et comme ſon adminiſtration tres

I COULD produce a great many more authorities to prove what I have aſſerted, but theſe

longue avoit eté authoriſée, par de grands ſuccez pendant la vie du feu roy, il renverſa toutes les formes dê la juſtice et des finances, et avoit introduit pour la ſouverain tribunal de la vie et les bien des hommes, *la volonte royale.* Mem. de M. de la Rochefoucault.

Le Cardinal de Richelieu fit, pour ainſi dire, un fond de toutes les mauvaiſe intentions et de toutes les ignorance des deux derniers ſiecles, pour s'en ſervir ſelon ſes interêts. Il les deguiſa en maximes utiles et neceſſaires pour etablir l'autorité royale, et la fortune ſecondant ſes deſſeins, par le deſarmement du parti proteſtant en France, par les victoires des Suedois, par la foibleſſe de l'empire, par l'incapacité d'Eſpagne, il forma dans la plus legitime des monarchies la plus ſcandaleuſe et la plus dangereuſe tyrannie, qui ait peut-être jamais aſſervi un etat. Mem. de Retz.

Il (Richelieu) fit un coup d'etat, en abbaiſſant les grands ſeignieurs, de maniere qu'il n'y on a plus aujourd-hui. Il fit un coup d'etat, en ôtant aux religionaires, leurs places de ſureté. Il fit un coup d'etat en eloignant des affaires les princes du ſang, et en les reduiſſant a la condition de ſimples ſujets.

Mais

theſe are enough, and perhaps indeed more than enough: for your Lordſhip may poſſibly think that I have brought myſelf into a ſtrange dilemma, either of denying that the French, ſince the times of Richelieu and Mazarin have been eminent for genius and taſte, or of contradicting the principle I have taken ſo much pains to eſtabliſh, that theſe cannot ſubſiſt in a deſpotic government. But I hope I am neither ſo partial, nor ſo utterly void of diſcernment, as not to allow the French of the preſent times to be conſpicuous both for genius and taſte; and I hope too, that I ſhall be able to account for it, conſiſtently with my opinion about the influence of liberty.

IT muſt be carefully remembered that the greateſt geniuſes the French can boaſt of, the Corneilles and Molieres, the Boſſuets and

Mais n'etendoit-il pas, n'affermiſſoit-il aſſez par ces diſpoſitions l'autorité royale? etoit-il neceſſaire de la rendre abſoluë? ne precipita-t-il pas les choſes d'un exces dans un autre? n'altera-t-il pas la conſtitution fondamentale du royaume? *Mes Penſées.*

Rochefoucaults, the Pouſſins and Le Bruns, and a great many more of their illuſtrious cotemporaries * were born before the efforts of Richelieu had fully eſtabliſhed the power of the French monarchs, and were formed in times, when that miniſter had not as yet given, what Cardinal De Retz, in his animated manner, calls a movement of rapidity to the royal authority †.

Had Richelieu been followed by a ſucceſſion of miniſters, who, bold and ſucceſsful as himſelf, had been able to make the torrent of royal power flow with increaſing velocity,

* Corneille was born in 1606, Moliere in 1620. Boſſuet in 1627. Rochefoucault in 1613. Pouſſin in 1594. Le Brun in 1619. Richelieu may be ſaid to have attained to the height of his power, after having reduced Rochelle in 1628, or rather after having defeated the intrigues againſt him, and got the better of all his antagoniſts in 1632.

† Le mouvement de rapidité que Mr. le Cardinal Richelieu avoit donné a l'autorité royale.

Mem. De Retz.

and

and ſweep away every inferior obſtacle with its impetuous ſtream, the French would indeed have become mere ſlaves, and genius and true taſte would quickly have diſappeared; but after his death they got a breathing time, and during the weakneſs of a minority, curbed the power of his ſucceſſor, inveſted the magiſtrates and laws with ſomewhat of their former dignity, and ſhewed a ſpirit, that obliged Mazarin to leave the kingdom for ſome time, and made him, after his return, cautious how he meddled with the rights of a people, which he found had ſtill ſome power and much inclination to oppoſe him. It required all his art not to ſuffer the crown to loſe that power, which Richelieu had acquired: to increaſe or carry it further was an attempt beyond his courage or genius.

THAT Lewis XIV. was abſolute cannot be denied; but he was ſo, more by his great *perſonal* character, and by the *voluntary* obedience that his *admiring* ſubjects paid him,

than by any alteration he made in the conſtitution beyond what Richelieu had done.

What the ſituation of France has been under his ſucceſſor is well known. The firmneſs and integrity of the magiſtrates hath given force and dignity to the laws; the prudent and ſeaſonable remonſtrances of the parliaments have ſupported the credit of their body, and prevented great encroachments from being made upon the fundamentals of the conſtitution, by a feeble adminiſtration, and a prince whom even his friends will not pretend to be of an elevated or enterpriſing character. When the members of the parliament of Paris were lately baniſhed on account of the religious diſputes, which have ſo long prevailed in France, it was found impracticable to carry on the buſineſs of the nation by an arbitrary council ſubſtituted in their place. Without making conceſſions, or giving up the point in diſpute, they were recalled, and have ſince, to their immortal honour, continued to defend the liberties of France,

France, and to puniſh thoſe prieſts, who refuſe the ſacraments to ſuch as will not declare their full aſſent to the conſtitution *Unigenitus*, by which theſe worthy magiſtrates have demonſtrated that liberty is not entirely aboliſhed in France.

THANK heaven, we in Great Britain are bleſt with a freedom unequalled by that of any other nation in the world. Of this happy freedom we have reaſon to boaſt, but we ought not raſhly to pronounce that other nations are mere ſlaves, and to talk as if we made no diſtinction between the ſlavery of Turkey and France. They indeed muſt be utterly unacquainted with this latter country, who don't know, that among the French, juſtice is regularly adminiſtred, and private property ſecured by the guardians of the law, who are a great and reſpectable body, which they never are in a deſpotic government; and that though the inhabitants of France do not enjoy a freedom comparable to that of Britain, yet they are certainly

certainly more free than the enſlaved Aſiatics, or even than ſeveral European nations.

THE argument, upon the whole, may be ſummed up in a few words. The period, in which the French taſte was gradually improving, was a period when the rights of the bulk of the people were gaining ground; genius and taſte were carried to their greateſt perfection by thoſe who were born at the very time when France was moſt free. Since the adminiſtration of Richelieu, the government hath been more arbitrary, and taſte hath not made any advances, perhaps hath not been kept up with an equal degree of elegance and ſpirit. But though it ſhould be allowed that it has, even this cannot greatly invalidate the argument in favour of the happy influence of liberty, ſince the French are certainly not ſo utterly deprived of freedom, or ſo much oppreſſed by the iron rod of ſlavery, as to be rendered incapable, like the ſubjects of deſpotic emperors, to be animated and improved by other favourable circumſtances.

IT would, indeed, be ſtrangely unreaſonable and bigotted to pretend, that liberty alone is ſufficient to improve the taſte of a nation, or that better opportunities, or more care may not make a people, that enjoys a ſmaller ſhare of freedom, excel one which poſſeſſes a greater, but is not bleſt with equal advantages in other reſpects, or has not had its attention ſo long turned to objects of taſte. There are degrees of freedom as of other things; every one is not endued with equally good parts; but pains and better opportunities often enable the man of *middling* talents to make a greater figure than one of far ſuperior natural abilities, who wanted theſe opportunities, or made a bad uſe of ſuch as he had. There is, however, a certain ſtupidity in ſome individuals, and deſpotiſm prevails ſo thoroughly in ſome countries, as to baffle every attempt to *improve*, or at leaſt every effort to *excel*.

IN a letter which I formerly wrote to your Lordſhip *, I took notice of ſome circum-

* See letter 5th.

ſtances

ſtances favourable to the taſte of France, ariſing from the peculiar genius and ſituation of its metropolis; but there are alſo other advantages that the French in general enjoy, which, it can hardly be denied, muſt have a happy influence.

THEIR language has become almoſt the univerſal language of Europe: their productions are read, tranſlated, approved of, or criticized every where: the beſt books of other nations too are tranſlated into French: the moſt ingenious of all countries viſit theirs, are deſirous of becoming acquainted with their celebrated men, and of communicating their own ſentiments to them. Though there are reſtraints upon the preſs at Paris, yet they fall upon ways of eluding them, or, if in ſome caſes they fail, Holland ſupplies them with whatever they want, and books of all kinds may be procured in France: no country is better ſtored with them, and no where does reading more generally prevail.

IF 'tis univerſally allowed that the invention of printing, by making the noble productions of Greece and Rome be read by vaſt numbers, contributed greatly to diffuſe the genuine taſte and freedom of ſpirit which began to prevail in the ſixteenth century; may it not with equal reaſon be owned, that the French, by having an opportunity of reading, in their own language, the beſt works of every country, are poſſeſſed of great opportunities of improvement, and of having their minds enlarged, and their prejudices corrected? How many Frenchmen have been the pupils of Bacon, of Locke, and of other illuſtrious geniuſes, formed in this iſland, as well as in other free countries abroad? The univerſality of the French language hath almoſt made the French, citizens of the world, and put it in their power to catch the ſpirit, to imbibe the ſentiments, and to acquire the ideas, which prevail among the ingenious men of every country.

IT has alſo had another effect; it has opened an eaſy acceſs to Frenchmen into every country

country of Europe, and made the ingenious of that nation be well received every where; as people are fond of becoming acquainted with the eminent men of a country, which has ſo long acquired the lead in polite accompliſhments, and whoſe language every court in Europe makes uſe of, when tranſacting buſineſs with foreign ſtates. Conſcious of this advantage, the free ſpirits of France are more independent at home than they would otherwiſe be, as they are ſure of a retreat in foreign countries, if their freedom ſhould happen to diſoblige the governors of their own, or make it diſagreeable for them to remain in France. When bigotry and envy had raiſed a party to get preſident Monteſquieu debarred from thoſe honours which his merit gave him a title to lay claim to, he told the miniſtry, that if ſuch an injury ſhould be done him, he would leave his native country, and accept of that ſecurity and thoſe honours which foreigners liberally offered him *. This, in all proba-

* See an account of his life in the Encyclop.

bility,

bility, prevented his being excluded from the French academy, and emboldened him to write with ſtill more freedom in his *ſpirit of laws*, than he had done in the *Perſian letters*, which at that time gave offence.

IN fact, do not we know that ſome of the greateſt men, whom France can at preſent boaſt to have given birth to, live abroad, honoured and careſſed? I need only name two of them, Maupertius * and Voltaire, the firſt of whom is at the head of his Pruſſian majeſty's academy, and the ſecond, hath at laſt fixed his abode in the territories of a free ſtate, where independent, he lives beyond the reach of arbitrary power, inſpired by that goddeſs eternally adored by mankind, the animating ſoul of every grand attempt, the object of noble vows, which, when preſent, every mortal with joy embraces, or, if abſent, longs for and anxiouſly recalls, which lives in every heart, and whoſe

* Maupertius died ſince this letter was written.

ſacred

ſacred name is ſilently worſhipped even in the courts of tyrants; By liberty---to borrow his own ſentiments,

-----C'eſt ſur ces bords heureux
Qu' habite des humains la deeſs eternelle,
L'aime des grands travaux, l'objeƈt des noble voeux,
Que tout mortel embraſſe, ou deſire, ou rapelle,
Qui vit dans tous les cœurs, et dont le nom ſacré
Dans les cours des tyrans eſt tout bas adoré,
La liberté.---------

Lines which I could not help tranſcribing from an admirable epiſtle, written by him, when he arrived at his Villa near the lake of Geneva.

THERE is a mighty difference between the ſtate of Europe at preſent, and what it was, when the Roman emperors became maſters of the world. Their ſway was univerſal, their ſubjeƈts could caſt their eyes upon no neighbouring

bouring free country, where they might be ſheltered from oppreſſion, and a view of whoſe liberty might give them the animating hopes of recovering their own. All, bended beneath the yoke of Rome and her tyrants. 'Tis otherwiſe in modern times. Every country in Europe, where arbitrary power prevails, is ſurrounded by ſuch as are free, which produces theſe different effects, it keeps ambitious men within bounds, and makes them afraid to proceed to extremities; it animates the minds of the people, and makes them hope to be what their neighbours are *; it ſpreads the principles of liberty over all Europe, and prevents the vital ſpark from being utterly extinguiſhed in any country.

THIS might almoſt alone account for the unequal influence of the abſolute power of the kings of France, and the Roman emperors, in

* Il eſt utile, qu'il-y ait un peuple libre, quand ce ne ſeroit que pour apprendre aux autres qu'ils peuvent l'être. *Mes Penſes.*

depreſſing genius and vitiating taſte, even allowing them to have been equally deſpotic, which is far from being the caſe. All the ſtates in Europe are ſo nicely ballanced, have ſo many interfering intereſts, and ſo much neceſſary communication with each other, that there is a ſort of interchange of the opinions, principles and moral ſentiments, as well as of the natural productions, and various manufactures of the different countries. In computing the freedom, the liberal ſpirit and taſte, which may be ſuppoſed to prevail in any nation, we ought not only to take into the account the advantages, they derive from their own conſtitution, but likewiſe thoſe which ariſe from their communication with other countries, and that protection which they may hope to find abroad, if they are oppreſſed at home. If we conſider the circumſtances of the French in theſe reſpects, we muſt certainly own, they are extremely favourable.

WITH this I ſhall conclude what I had to offer in anſwer to the objections, that may be brought againſt the happy influence of liberty upon taſte as well as genius, from what has happened in France in modern times. The natural influence of freedom to improve every faculty of the human mind, might indeed be proved by abſtract principles, but arguments of that ſort are always leſs entertaining than thoſe which are deduced from hiſtorical facts. Similar reaſonings and obſervations, made upon the circumſtances and ſituation of other nations, when your Lordſhip is reading the General Hiſtory of the world, may be ſucceſsfully employed to refute all the objections that can be brought againſt the principle, here attempted to be eſtabliſhed from the ſtate of taſte in any other country, even in modern Italy itſelf.

YOUR Lordſhip's genius will enable you to do this with much more advantage and pleaſure to yourſelf than I could do. The active exertion of one's own talents is always

more agreeable and improving, than tediouſly to follow the reaſonings of another. But this puts me in mind that it is high time to conclude my letter, and to aſk pardon for having made it ſo long. I am,

My Lord, &c.

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LETTER VIII.

Why POETRY has flouriſhed more in England, than SCULPTURE or PAINTING.

MY LORD,

IF liberty, as I endeavoured to prove in ſome former letters, be favourable to genius and taſte, and if Britain be the happy iſle,

Where, long foretold, the people reigns;
Where each a vaſſal's humble heart diſdains *;

* Dr. Akenſide's ode to the earl of Huntingdon.

it may ſeem ſurpriſing that in ſome things we have been excelled, and in others ſo nearly equalled, by our leſs free neighbours. Can this be attributed to the genius of the people? It certainly cannot. That we have produced philoſophers of ſuperior merit, whoſe great efforts enabled them to attain to the higheſt pinnacle of the temple of wiſdom, from whence they could behold thoſe of other nations every where groping in the dark, and widely erring from the paths of truth and real ſcience,* is undoubtedly certain: the awful name of Newton puts it beyond diſpute. But, my Lord, it does more, it proves that this country muſt have produced geniuſes, which, if properly encouraged, might have been capable of any thing. There is a natural connection between all the faculties of the human ſoul; an age and nation that produces great men in one way, might in

* —Sapientum templa ſerena,
Deſpicere unde queas alios, paſſimque videre
Errare. —————— *Lucret.*

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another; if its genius were turned to that object. What power of the human mind can we ſuppoſe not to have been poſſeſſed by one, who could penetrate into the laws of nature, and unravel the amazing plan of the univerſe with ſuch perſpicuity as Sir Iſaac Newton? Depth of judgment was not alone ſufficient, the ſtrongeſt *imagination* muſt have been neceſſary to enable one to conceive how the ſame force, which cauſes a ſtone to fall to the ground, makes the planets gravitate to each other, and to comprehend how the various laws of nature regulate the appearances and motions of thoſe bodies, which the great Creator of all things hath exhibited to our view in the immenſity of ſpace! If Newton diſcovered leſs reliſh and taſte for inferior beauties and harmonies, 'twas becauſe his mind was occupied by a grander beauty, and a more divine harmony, that of the univerſe and the ſpheres. When men, eminent in that ſcience in which he excelled, condeſcend to treat of inferior arts, they can convince the world how much they

are capable of out-doing the reſt of mankind even in theſe; a ſtriking proof of which Dr. Smith has lately given in his Harmonics, a work, in which the true principles of muſic are allowed, by the beſt judges, to have been better explained than they ever were.

But not only in the ſublime and philoſophic ſciences, even in arts which are allowed to depend more intimately upon the powers of imagination and a fine taſte, Britain has produced ſuch examples as may convince any one, that the inhabitants of this iſland, whenever they are properly encouraged, and apply to them, may excel in all the polite arts. Did the grand productions of Michael Angelo, in architecture, painting and ſtatuary, require a greater ſublimity of imagination than the Paradiſe Loſt? Do the works of any landſcape-painter diſcover a fancy more forcibly ſtruck, or capable of deſcribing natural objects with more truth or energy, than the *pictureſque* pen of Thomſon has done in his Seaſons, a poem, which conſidered

ſidered in this light is admirable, the ideas of almoſt every page of which, exhibited upon canvas, would, without any addition, make a ſtriking landſcape, equal perhaps to any of the moſt famous maſters. Has not England produced writers of the comic kind of the greateſt merit? We can indeed at preſent boaſt of a painter in this way, whoſe talents are unequalled and inimitable: Mr. Hogarth need not be named to let you know who this original genius is.

WHENCE then can it ariſe that, with a genius capable of excelling in all, the Engliſh have been eminent only in ſome particular branches of the fine arts, and that Britain has produced ſo many good poets, and no painters or ſtatuaries capable of contending with Pouſſin, Le Brun, and Girardon? I do not mention theſe, as if I meant to ſay that they are the greateſt maſters in their different ways; I know the Raphaels, the Rubens, the Michael Angelos have greatly excelled them; but

but I have named them, becauſe they are the boaſt of a country that has ſo long rivalled this iſland in every thing: but which the inhabitants of Great Britain have a genius capable of excelling, if proper encouragement was given to it, and proper methods taken to cultivate and improve it. This I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate, and to offer ſome reaſons that may throw light upon the queſtion, Why England has produced ſo many great poets, and no capital painters or ſtatuaries?

To anſwer the firſt part of the queſtion, one need only put another: why have the muſes had votaries in every country upon earth? Among barbarous and uncivilized nations, they have been worſhipped by rough unpoliſhed bards, and in every polite and civilized country, by ſuch as were inſpired with a genius and taſte more ſuitable to the dignity and elegance of thoſe Deities? The firſt writers almoſt in every country were poets, one reaſon of which may have been

been this: a ſentiment, well expreſſed in harmonious verſe, might perhaps never be ſo elegantly expreſſed again, even by the perſon who firſt uttered it; one word, nay the placing of a word, or the arrangement of a ſentence, being forgot, the harmony is loſt, and the pleaſure we enjoyed, when liſtening to the ſweet ſounds, is felt no more. Hence thoſe, whoſe genius enabled them to relate any adventure in elegant verſe, or to ſing of any ſubject in pleaſing ſtrains, conſcious of the admiration with which they were heard, and afraid that theſe harmonious ſentences ſhould ſlip out of their memory, wrote them down, that they might have it in their power to pleaſe again with words, which they had found to pleaſe before. Emulation, and a deſire of excelling, natural to man, prompted others to aſpire to the ſame applauſe. As every country grew civilized, and its language elegant and correct, poets by degrees became more excellent, and their verſes more poliſhed and refined. 'Tis an entertaining ſpeculation to reflect upon the gradual improvements

ments of nations and men; to trace the efforts of the Britiſh muſe from the ſongs of the antient Druids to the ſublime poetry of Milton, and the elegant and ſenſible verſes of Pope.

Since knowledge and arts, forſaking the eaſtern regions of this globe, have deigned to viſit the weſtern world, Britain has been eminent for learning and ſcience: its inhabitants have long vied with all their neighbours, and in latter ages have produced geniuſes of ſuch ſuperior merit, as has rendered the victory in theſe articles, even in the opinion of the beſt judges among our rivals, immortal. Mr. Voltaire owns, that, if we conſider the great and uſeful diſcoveries in philoſophy, that age, which he eſteems to have been the moſt enlightened of any, may with as much propriety be called the age of England, as of Lewis XIV *. Poſſeſſed too of a lan-

* C'eſt de ſon ſein (la Societé Royale) que ſortirent de nos jours les decouverts ſur la lumiere, ſur le principe

language originally copious and bold, and at laſt by many efforts highly improved, Britain has produced poets of a genius more reſembling the noble ſpirit of the antients, than perhaps any other country in modern times. I ſay reſembling the *ſpirit* of the antients, for it cannot be denied that their critical accuracy has been more copied by the writers of ſome other nations. To the genius of the people, and that elevated ſpirit which liberty inſpires, we owe our excelling in the firſt: to our negligence, and to the ſuperior care beſtowed upon criticiſm in a neighbouring country, 'tis owing that we are excelled in the ſecond.

It has often been obſerved, with a ſeeming depth of judgment, that academies and ſocieties, eſtabliſhed for the encouragement of

cipe de la gravitation, ſur l'aberration des etoiles fixes, ſur la geometrie tranſcendante, et cent autres inventions, qui pourraient a cet egard faire appeller ce ſiécle, le ſiécle des Anglois, auſſi bien que celui de Louis XIV.

ſciences

ſciences and arts, for judging of the merit of works, and beſtowing rewards and honors upon thoſe who excel, in fact does more harm than good *. This obſervation, as it contradicts what appears to be at firſt evident, ſeems ingenious, but if we conſider it, 'twill be found to be over-refined, and unjuſt. "In France, ſays Dr. Brown, the ſeverities "of the academy have utterly quenched the "high tragic ſpirit †". However, this can hardly be allowed, when we reflect that even tranſlations of Zara, and ſome other French tragedies of modern date, are favourite and ſtock-plays upon the Engliſh ſtage, and ſeem to be at leaſt as ſpirited as ſeveral performances of our own tragic writers of the preſent times.

But though it were allowed that the high tragic ſpirit had utterly forſaken the French,

* Les academies, inſtitues pour etendre le Genie, mais bien plus propres a le borner, ont fondé des prix, &c. *Mes Penſes.*

† Eſſays on the Characteriſtics, p. 34.

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another and a better reaſon might be given for it; it might be ſuppoſed that the elevated ſpirit of tragedy would decay in a country where power has made ſuch encroachments upon liberty. This would certainly have been the caſe, had not other favourable circumſtances in ſome meaſure prevented it: among theſe, I cannot help being perſuaded that the efforts of the academy ought not to be omitted, and that its inſtitution may be ſaid to be one reaſon, (beſides thoſe which I took notice of in a former letter) that has enabled the French to bear up againſt the miſchievous influence of arbitrary power upon genius and taſte.

If the natural effect of a gay and thoughtleſs court be to promote a taſte for every thing that is frivolous and fantaſtical, and a reliſh for luxury and ſilly amuſements, rather than manly pleaſures and rational entertainments, can we conceive any thing better calculated to ſerve as an antidote againſt this relaxing poiſon, than the eſtabliſhment of a ſociety

ſociety of men eminent for their parts, and among whom they alone can make a figure, who improve their talents and ſeverely correct the irregularities of fancy and taſte? If an admiſſion into this ſociety be aſpired to as an honour by the greateſt men of the country, both for abilities and rank, muſt it not naturally have this double effect? to excite every perſon of genius to endeavour to merit a place in it by cultivating his talents, and to render the ſociety itſelf ſo reſpectable and illuſtrious, that its deciſions will be regarded with veneration, and its taſte, formed by a ſtudy of what is natural and juſt, and by being converſant with the ſentiments of the greateſt men both among the living and the dead, become ſo authoritative as even to be able to oppoſe that of a diſſipated and unthinking court.

If in ſome countries, particularly in France, very ſmall or perhaps no improvements have been made in the fine arts ſince the eſtabliſhment of ſocieties to promote and encourage

them, it must have proceeded from some circumstances less friendly to genius and taste than such academies can possibly be supposed to be; or perhaps they had already been brought to the greatest perfection the genius and language of the people were capable of. But without taking a great deal for granted, we may affirm, that, in all probability, had it not been for these institutions, a decay of genius, and a corruption of taste would have been both more real and apparent. Such societies concurring with other favourable circumstances can never be disadvantageous. What was that assembly, in Greece, which at the feast of Minerva, distributed rewards and conferred honours upon the best poets, historians, and artists, but a society of learned men, (for it consisted of a select number) who, having improved their own talents, were capable of judging of the works of others, and of teaching the multitude to place their admiration upon worthy objects? Did not the honors, that were bestowed upon Herodotus, fire the mind of

Thucydides, then a boy, and prompt him to apply all the force of his genius to emulate or excel the father of Hiſtory? Can we ſuppoſe that this inſtitution had a bad effect, nay that it was not one of the principal cauſes of that genuine elegance and correctneſs of taſte which rendered the works of Greece ſo inimitably beautiful?

If, indeed, ſuch ſocieties are not eſtabliſhed 'till genius be viſibly on the decline, they may be of little uſe. 'Tis too late to ſend a horſe to the manage when his fire and vigour is gone, or after bad uſage has broke his ſpirits; but certainly if he be taken while he yet *paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his ſtrength*, and ſent to be trained in a proper manner, it will not be ſaid that the ſkill of a maſter may not add a grace to all his motions, and correct the fury and irregularity of his unmanaged efforts, without making him a bit the leſs a ſpirited and noble animal. Care and ſtudy does not extinguiſh genius and fire, but makes them burn with a more equal

and illuminating flame. Nothing can be better calculated to correct the irregular fallies of an ingenious people, and to reduce their compoſitions to a graceful form, than a ſociety inveſted with dignity, and appointed to cultivate and promote the liberal arts. Had ſuch a ſociety been eſtabliſhed in London, when Shakeſpear wrote, the works of that great man would not have afforded, "as Mr. Pope owns they do *, the moſt numerous as well as moſt conſpicuous inſtances both of beauties and faults of all ſorts." The firſt indeed his genius would have abundantly ſupplied him with, but the laſt he would have been taught and encouraged to avoid, by having the countenance of good judges, and being ſupported againſt "the taſte and humour that then prevailed †".

HERE then, we may perceive one reaſon why our neighbours with much leſs genius

* Preface to Shakeſpear.

† Id. et ibid.

have excelled us in correctneſs of taſte. They have eſtabliſhed in their metropolis, ſocieties to ſuperintend and direct the public approbation, while we have allowed the humours of the people to be the ſovereign arbitrator. In dramatic performances, the Pit has always been able to condemn or approve, and this has generally been led by a few; who, without perhaps any other qualification but a larger ſhare of briſkneſs and conceit than the reſt, have taken upon them to direct the judgment of the town. The univerſities, removed at a diſtance, could not have much influence: in theſe a foundation might be laid for excelling, by ſtudying the originals of all beauty; but when works came to be offered to the town, 'twas found that a claſſical ſpirit was leſs calculated to pleaſe, than one more adapted to the taſte of a place where no ſuch learned ſocieties were inſtituted, and where a different taſte prevailed. Were a ſociety, like the French academy, eſtabliſhed in London, of ſuch dignity as to make the moſt accompliſhed among the Great,

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ambitious of being members of it, it could not fail of having a happy influence. Not only would it ſerve to promote a good taſte, it would alſo give a ſpur to genius, and encourage many people to cultivate talents, which at preſent they neglect. What an additional ornament would ſuch a ſociety be to the Britiſh metropolis! What an honor would it be to its *Founder*, and to thoſe whoſe intereſt and rank might give them an opportunity of promoting ſuch an inſtitution! This would make correctneſs of taſte as much the characteriſtic of the Engliſh writers, as freedom and genius have hitherto been, and ſoon enable the Britiſh muſes to become as ſuperior to the French in the former as they are by all good judges allowed to be in the latter.

To the genius then of the people, and to that of liberty, to the boldneſs and copiouſneſs of our language, we may aſcribe the elevated ſpirit of Britiſh poetry; to the want of any learned ſocieties, eſtabliſhed in London, we may attribute thoſe extravagant

flights, and that irregularity, which, it muſt be owned, are too conſpicuous in ſome of the greateſt names among the Engliſh poets. But to what, my Lord, can it be aſcribed, that England has produced no painters or ſtatuaries, whoſe productions have been known beyond the limits of their own country; while Italy, the Low Countries, and France have produced maſters in that way, whoſe works have become precious over all the world, and for which immenſe ſums are every where given? This muſt ariſe from ſome cauſe or other in the circumſtances or genius of the people. I ſhall give you my conjectures about it: probability is all one can expect in ſuch a ſubject, though undoubtedly, among a people ſo remarkable for genius in other reſpects as the Engliſh, ſuch a deficiency muſt have ariſen from moral cauſes, and not from any natural inability of excelling in that particular art.

When was it that England began to be eminent for a good taſte, and to boaſt of great poets? was it not about the time of

the reformation? An event in every other reſpect of the happieſt conſequence to this iſland, but which naturally gave a check to improvements in ſculpture and painting, by taking away the greateſt encouragements and motives to excel in theſe arts. In Italy, at the reſtoration of politeneſs and arts, poets and painters appeared at the ſame time.

A Raphael painted, and a Vida ſung *.

In England, Spenſer and Shakeſpear, much greater poets than Vida, were accompanied with no painters of any fame, much leſs able to enter the liſts with Raphael the greateſt maſter of his art, the modern world can boaſt of; and ever ſince the revival of letters and arts, Great Britain hath been left infinitely behind in painting by Italy, and other Roman Catholic countries, while our poets have ſung with a nobler fire, and catched the free and manly ſpirit of the antients, more per-

* Pope's Eſſay on Criticiſm.

haps than has been done by thoſe of any other country in modern times.

THERE are no paſſions of the human mind capable of being worked up to greater heights, or of producing ſtronger effects, than ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm; hence we may eaſily conceive, what an influence the conſecrating of ſtatues and pictures, as objects of adoration in Roman Catholic countries, muſt have upon the minds of the people, and for what reaſons no pains are ſpared, and no expence grudged, to procure pieces of the moſt ſtriking beauty and expreſſion to adorn popiſh altars, and to animate the devotion of ſuperſtitious votaries. Fact and experience, as well as reaſon and theory, confirm this opinion, and naturally account for thoſe ſtrong powers of fancy which Roman Catholic painters have diſcovered, and for that great encouragement they have met with from the *religious*. The firſt and the laſt works of almoſt all the great maſters have been devotional pieces, and done too for ſome religious houſe.

CIM-

CIMABUE, the father and reſtorer of painting in modern times, when a boy, uſed to ſtep from ſchool and ſpend his hours in viewing thoſe painters, which the governors of Florence had brought from Greece, and who were at work in the chapel of the family of Gondi, in the church of *Sancta Maria Novella* *. There he firſt had his imagination warmed, and formed thoſe ideas of an art, he afterwards carried to a degree of perfection, which, though far inferior to what it has ſince arrived at, was infinitely ſuperior to that in which he found it. A picture of the Bleſſed Virgin done by him for that very church was beheld with ſuch admiration, that all the people of Florence went to receive it from him at his houſe, and conducted it with extraordinary demonſtrations of joy, with great pomp and the ſound of trumpets, to the church where it was to be placed †. Such honors muſt have power-

* Felib. Vies de Peint.

† Les ouvrages qu'il fit parurent ſi admirables in compariſon des autres qu'on voyoit en ce tems la, qu'ayant

powerfully incited others to endeavour to excel in an art that could acquire one ſo much applauſe.

THE Hiſtory of the moſt famous modern painters is principally taken up with accounts of the encouragement they received from Popes, and of the pictures they did for churches and religious houſes *. Raphael was ſo highly honoured by Julius II. and Leo X. that he even hoped to have been made a Cardinal †. His greateſt and beſt pieces were done for churches, and the ſubjects of them are taken from ſacred hiſtory. The Transfiguration, his laſt and moſt perfect performance, ſhews how much his imagination was elevated above vulgar conceptions by a ſtudy of the ſublime paſſages of Scripture, ſince he has

ayant peint un vierge pour metre dans l'Egliſe de Santa Maria Novella de Florence, tout le peuple fut prendre ce tableau chez lui, et avec une joye extraordinaire, le porta en pomp, au bruit de trompettes, juſq'au lieu ou il devoit être poſé. Felib. Vies de Peint.

* Felib. Vies des Peint. paſſim. † Id.

given

given ſuch a divine reſplendence to the figure of our Saviour, as is allowed to be indeed wonderful, and makes a fine writer ſay, that he exerted a laſt and great effort, to ſhew the power of his art, in conveying an idea even of things which are inexpreſſible *. But 'tis unneceſſary to ſhew what motives to excel, and how much employment the image worſhip of the church of Rome gives to painters and ſtatuaries; this is ſo evident as to ſtand in need of no illuſtration. I ſhall only add, that the fine pictures and ſtatues, with which the Popiſh altars are adorned, and to which their religion commands the people to fix their eyes with devout attention, muſt give an opportunity of viewing fine pieces, and of having one's fancy often warmly ſtruck with the charming productions of ſculpture and painting, which is not to be met with in Proteſtant countries, and conſequently muſt afford young people many occaſions of

* Il a fait un dernier effort, pour montrer la puiſſance de ſon art dans les choſes même qui ne ſe peuvent exprimer. Felib. Vies des Peint.

feeling

feeling the power of their genius, and of discovering their taſte for the imitative arts. Beſides, a picture, which devotion bids one behold with veneration, muſt make a far deeper impreſſion upon the mind, and affect it with a more ſenſible rapture, than it could poſſibly do, were one only to look at it as a common piece of art, or from no other motive but to gratify taſte or curioſity. Strange things have been told of the ſtrong impreſſions made by images upon the imagination, and of the effect of ſuch impreſſions. The ingenious Malbranche tells us, I think, for I have not got his book by me, of a woman who bore a child with a face exactly reſembling the image of an old Saint, to which ſhe had conſtantly paid her devotions during the time of her pregnancy. If this ſtory be true, it is a ſtriking proof with what ſenſibility pictures are ſometimes beheld by thoſe who kneel to popiſh ſhrines. And if the theory, that every ſentiment of the mother is in ſome meaſure communicated to the fœtus, be juſt, it proves too, that the im-

impreſſion, made by a picture upon the fancy of the mother, muſt in a ſmall degree affect the child's, and ſtamp an original taſte for painting upon its imagination. Thus the circumſtances that are favourable to the arts of painting and ſculpture in Roman-catholic countries may be traced back even to the moſt diſtant and primitive impreſſions that are ſtamped upon the human mind.

HERE, however, I cannot help taking notice that, though it muſt be owned that the ſenſible objects, which are conſecrated by the church of Rome to excite the devotion of the people, give a ſuperior advantage to countries, where that religion prevails, to excel in the plaſtic arts, 'tis no argument for us to fall in love with popery, or to become leſs zealous againſt its ſuperſtition. The productions of painting and ſculpture have often been made uſe of by deſigning men to work up devotion to wild enthuſiaſm, and a reverence for the ſupreme Being to abject and cruel ſuperſtition. Beſides, the rapture, which one feels, when

when viewing exquiſite pieces of art, attaches the mind almoſt wholly to ſenſible objects, and obſcures thoſe intellectual conceptions of the divinity, which are alone proper, eſpecially when we approach to worſhip the father of the univerſe, who is a ſpirit, and muſt be worſhipped in ſpirit. Struck with the viſible image, the mind forgets the inviſible Being, and like Æmilius when he beheld the Jupiter of Phidias, is apt to imagine that it ſees Jove himſelf *.

I CANNOT help being perſuaded that the ſituation of Great Britain has been another reaſon why ſculpture and painting have made ſo ſmall progreſs in this country. Living in an iſland, and almoſt ſeparated from the reſt of the world, the inhabitants of England have been leſs viſited by foreigners of *diſtinction* than thoſe of any other part of Europe of equal conſequence, and thus have wanted one motive to encourage arts that are

* Jovem velut præſentem. *Liv.* ſee above, page 116.

or-

ornamental, the vanity of diſplaying grand works to ſtrangers. The ſtates on the Continent, being as it were thorough-fares to each other, and often viewed not only by foreigners who come to reſide in them, but by thoſe who paſs through them in their way to neighbouring countries, have been incited by a natural deſire of making their country look fine in the eyes of ſtrangers, to cultivate thoſe arts, which have always been allowed to conduce moſt to the ornament and embelliſhment of a nation; architecture, ſculpture, and painting. To what other cauſe can we aſcribe it, that the chief towns of ſome ſmall ſtates abroad have more public ornaments than this great and opulent city? In modern times indeed the number of foreigners who live and do buſineſs in London is immenſe, but even now we are perhaps leſs viſited out of curioſity, and by people of faſhion who travel for improvement *alone*, than any other conſiderable nation in Europe, certainly much leſs ſo than moſt of them.

But whether the want of that emulation, which is naturally excited by being viſited by ingenious foreigners and people of diſtinction has been one cauſe or not why the plaſtic arts have been little cultivated here, what I am going to mention will certainly be owned to have been a principal reaſon of it. The Engliſh nobility and people of faſhion have reſided leſs in London, than thoſe of the ſame rank in other nations have done in the capitals of their different countries. I ſhall not enter into the diſpute how far this may have been of advantage to the kingdom in general, or what bad effects may ariſe from the taſte for living in town, or near it, that has of late prevailed ſo much among people of rank and fortune beyond what it did in former times: whatever bad conſequences may flow from this humour in other reſpects, it muſt be allowed to have a natural tendency to improve and poliſh the manners of the people, to promote a taſte for what is elegant and ſplendid, and to afford the greateſt encouragement and opportunities to cultivate

tivate the fine arts. The truth of this obſervation may be proved from reaſon as well as from experience. In every nation, that has made a figure for politeneſs, the capital has been the principal reſidence of all who have been eminent for the accompliſhments of their minds, and the elegance of their taſtes. How, indeed, ſhould it be otherwiſe? Man is a ſocial creature: there is a natural and ſtrong attraction, by which thoſe of ſimilar characters and purſuits are drawn together. 'Tis not in every village or country-neighbourhood, that one, who has been well educated, and taken care to improve his talents, can meet with many who are able to gratify that deſire, which all have of contracting friendſhips with perſons whoſe knowledge and ſentiments are upon a level with their own.

HENCE men become deſirous of living in capitals and populous cities, where the largeneſs and extent of ſociety gives the greater chance of meeting with perſons of a turn of mind

ſuited and agreeable to their own. It is altogether unneceſſary to endeavour to prove how much ſociety and the converſation of ſenſible and ingenious men correct every error and improve every talent of the human mind. This is felt and acknowledged by every one capable of improvement, but by none more than by thoſe, who have a taſte for the fine arts. In the retired ſhades of a college, abſtract ſcience and profound learning may flouriſh more than in the gay ſunſhine of a brilliant metropolis; but 'tis not ſo with the imitative arts, particularly ſculpture and painting. 'Tis among the ruins of the large cities of antiquity, that the precious remains of ancient art are to be found. Nor will theſe arts ever be greatly improved in any country, 'till a taſte for embelliſhing the metropolis ariſes, and a truly elegant one can never ariſe 'till thoſe of rank and fortune reſide ſome part of the year in the capital. A nobleman, who lives generally in the country, may ſpend a great deal of money in adorning his country-ſeat, but after he has done

done all that he poſſibly can to make it grand as well as elegant, it will not have ſo ſenſible an effect to diffuſe a good taſte, as a houſe built (at much leſs expence) in a city would have. In towns every thing is criticiſed, and approved or condemned, the number of artiſts, their taſte and their emulation, the multitude of ſpectators, indeed every circumſtance contributes to inſpire thoſe, who are to execute any piece of work, that is to be expoſed to the eyes of the public, to do all they can to correct their deſigns, avoid cenſure, and merit the approbation of good judges. On the other hand, fine works, by being expoſed to the view of many, have a conſiderable influence to give juſt ideas of what is beautiful or grand.

But not only does this improve artiſts themſelves: they who employ them receive much improvement, and are taught what is really elegant, and what is not ſo. Whatever a nobleman does in a remote part of the country is admired and praiſed by thoſe

around him: in cities this does not happen. Thoſe who are upon a level with the Great, or independent, will not ſcruple to find fault with their taſte. Men are aſhamed of being thought vulgar or unpoliſhed in any thing; hence the natural effect of people of faſhion's living in town is, that both the external appearance of their houſes, and the ornaments within, are gradually improved and become elegant and fine: pictures and ſtatues, as the nobleſt embelliſhments, become almoſt neceſſary to every houſe of taſte: great encouragement is given to the art of painting, and this promotes emulation among the profeſſors of that art, the neceſſary conſequence of which is improvement and ſkill.

THIS reaſoning is certainly juſt, but a view of what actually has happened greatly confirms it.

SINCE London became the general reſidence of people of rank for a conſiderable part of the year, what improvements have been

been made, and are daily making! To name particulars is unneceſſary; they are known to every one, and I am perſuaded that in a few years this metropolis will be as famous for its elegant buildings, and for artiſts that excel in painting and ſculpture, as it is at preſent for its opulence and trade. The encouragement, that hath been lately given to theſe arts, has already had a ſenſible effect, and will in time convince the world, that it was not owing to any want of genius, but to other circumſtances, that the Engliſh have excelled leſs in ſculpture and painting than in poetry. Succeſsful in war, and ſuperior to our rivals in arms, many favourable circumſtances give us the beſt grounds to hope, that we ſhall ſoon be equally ſo in every other reſpect. While their ſpirits are depreſſed, ours muſt riſe: while their government, chagrined with repeated diſappointments, will in all probability grow more ſevere; we have the happy proſpect of ſeeing religion, virtue, liberty, ſcience and arts encouraged and flouriſhing amongſt us. Inſpired

ſpired by ROYAL EXAMPLE, thoſe of diſtinguiſhed rank, will be incited to promote every thing that tends to the good, the honour, and the improvement of their country. The ſpirit of the times in which your Lordſhip has the happineſs to be called upon to act your part in life, will be an additional motive to prompt you to do it in that noble and generous manner which ſo much becomes your high rank, and is ſo agreeable to your natural taſte and good diſpoſitions.

I am,

MY LORD, &c.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 61. l. 15. for *ſpend*, read *ſpent*.
119. l. 2. for *ſtudy that*, read *ſtudy of that*.
159. l. 8. for *fields*, read *field*.
173. l. 19. after *liberty*, put a ;
191. for *Maupertius*, read *Maupertuis*.
192. l. 6. for *l'aime*, read *l'ame*.
206. l. 4. for *does*, read *do*.

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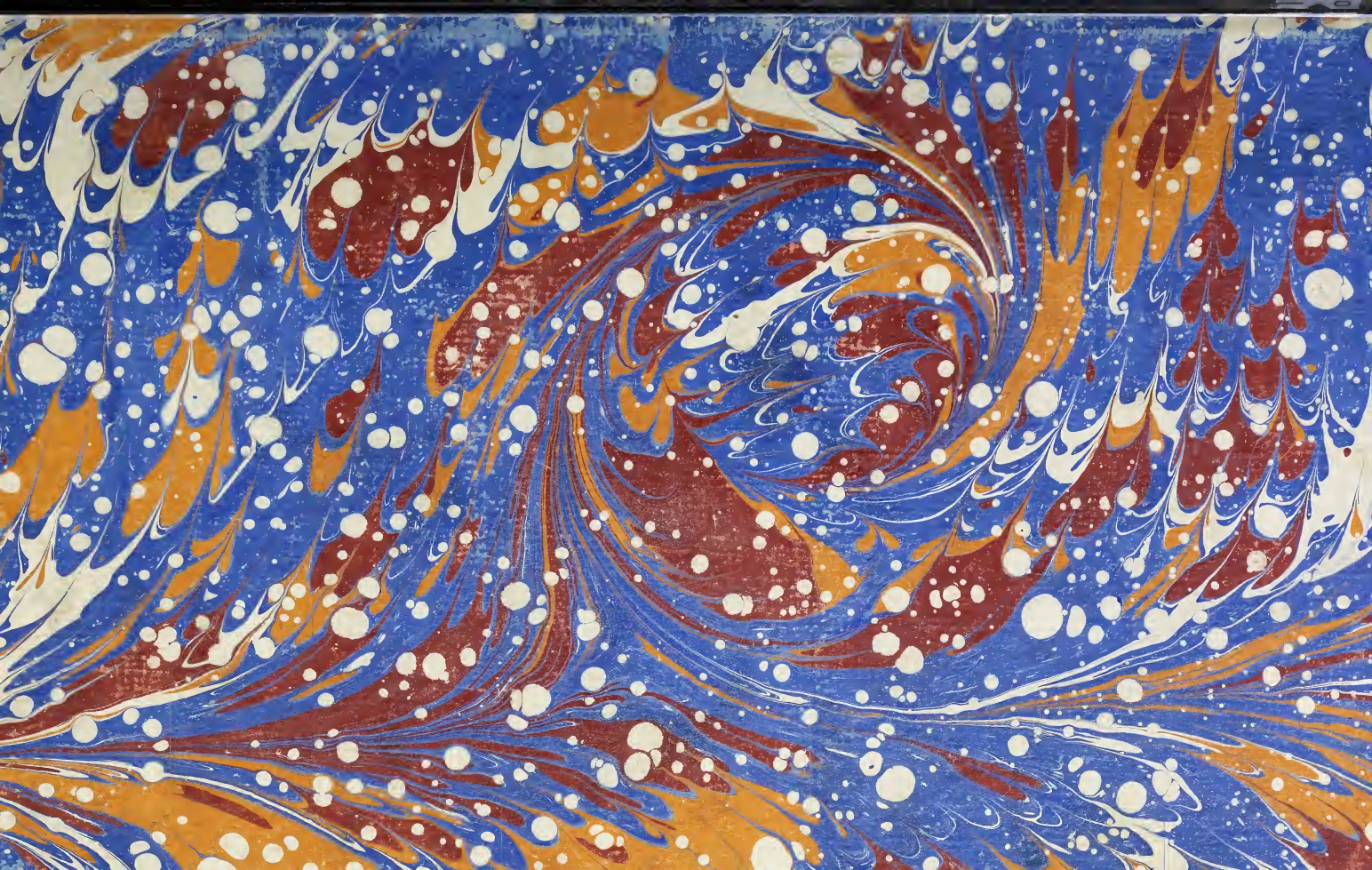
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